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***Harry Potter: os contornos do processo de  
crescimento***

***Harry Potter in book and film – the negotiating of  
growing pains***



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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Línguas, Literaturas e Culturas, variante de estudos ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica do Dr. Anthony David Barker, Professor Associado do Departamento de Línguas e Literaturas da Universidade de Aveiro.

O presente trabalho é dedicado muito especialmente aos meus três homens:  
**ao Rui, ao André e ao Pedro**, que sempre manifestaram o seu apoio e  
interesse, permitindo-me concretizar um sonho antigo.

## **o júri**

presidente

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**palavras-chave**

*Harry Potter*, mundos paralelos, feitiçaria, amizade, lealdade, processo de crescimento

**resumo**

Com o presente trabalho pretende-se fazer uma abordagem ao processo de crescimento de Harry Potter, tendo por base a sua condição de órfão e o modo como se adaptou às circunstâncias, concretamente ao mundo da feitiçaria, deixando para trás o que havia adquirido enquanto membro da família Dursley. Neste âmbito, são abordadas relevantes teorias do desenvolvimento, com o intuito de explicar as transformações ocorridas, assim como a apresentação da escola de Hogwarts como instituição de efetiva socialização. Por último, é feito um comentário sobre *Harry Potter* como fenómeno comercial à escala mundial, baseado na contribuição dos vários meios de comunicação, especialmente do cinema.

**keywords**

*Harry Potter*, parallel worlds, witchcraft, friendship, loyalty, growing process

**Abstract**

The present work aims at making an approach to Harry Potter's growing process, bearing in mind his orphan condition and the way he is forced to adapt to circumstances, mainly to the world of wizards, leaving behind what he had learned as a member of the Dursley family. Relevant theories in developmental psychology are invoked to explain what processes are at issue and I further look at the school of Hogwarts as an institution of effective socialization. Lastly, I offer a commentary on the *Potter* phenomenon as a global franchise in many media, particularly film.



The logo of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry



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## Introduction

After a long time of thought devoted to the Harry Potter phenomenon, there was the strong conviction that it seemed the best subject to develop, based not only on professional interest, but also considering the preferences of the family milieu. Over time, a progressive awareness of the *Harry Potter* package of cultural products strikingly started to grow, and to be a constant presence around children, teenagers and adolescents, these products showing a marked propensity for longevity. As a result, the present work aims at showing how, within fiction, fantasy can be an appealing method to capture youngsters' attention. In fact, by means of new realities, children, teenagers and adolescents are allowed to enter parallel worlds, not merely of psychological comfort and stability, but also of explicit challenge and stimulation, precisely corresponding to their own and very personal life experiences and inner conflicts, quite natural in this developmental phase of profound transformations. As Belcher and Stephenson argue:

Through the series, readers observe a number of characters in their effort to cope with the exceptional. Harry offers a particularly interesting example, as he is notably different from his family and peers in both Muggle and Wizzarding worlds. His lightning bolt scar is but one mark of his difference; having magical abilities sets him apart from the Muggle world, while certain specific magical skills, such as being able to speak Parseltongue, mark him as having different and potentially more powerful, magical skills than do other wizards. (Belcher & Stephenson, 2011: 121)

The *Harry Potter* saga is a series of seven books, starting with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, published on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1997, when Harry Potter was an eleven-year-old boy. Then came *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, published on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1998, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, published on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1999, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, published on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2000, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, published on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2003, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, published on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2005, and finally *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, published on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2007, when Harry Potter was seventeen years old. However, although J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* saga comprises seven books and eight films, the aim of this study is only to focus on *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *Harry*

*Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, (henceforth to be referred to only as *Philosopher's Stone*, *Goblet of Fire* and *Deathly Hallows*) with greater emphasis on the analysis of the three books and less attention given to the films. The intention with this selection is to show the life of a boy at defined stages of his life, pointing out some characteristics inherent to each of these, as a form of reflecting upon his psychological development. At the same time, there is also the aim of referring to the wider cultural impact achieved by the publication of the books and the subsequent release of the corresponding films.

The new fictional scenarios presented and developed through the seven books also allow readers of any age to commit themselves to a serious reflection upon present conceptions of family, the kind of relationships that hold teenagers' interest, their own opinion about the odd world of adults and all the demands imposed to them, thereby creating a climate of instability and misunderstanding, leading to a lack of balance in the construction and development of parent/child relationships and consequently to an unambiguous lack of support within the process of mental development. Thus, the growing child needs a shelter where he is accepted as he is, without permanent criticism, conflict or distressing pressure, so as to provide him with a more peaceful life experience, therefore avoiding possible social breakdowns.

In *Harry Potter* there is also the intention of offering an analysis of the type of interest created in youngsters, as well as checking the evolution from the first to the last of J. K. Rowling's books, bearing in mind her creation of an alternative universe with its own very specific characteristics which pleased its readers so comprehensively. Its success, both in book and in film, can be open to various interpretations, as there is a strong emphasis on the imaginary, on witchcraft, on the making of a parallel world, but where loyalty, friendship or justice are just a few of the main ideals. In fact, J. K. Rowling's creations function by enabling readers to always be in the same mood as the characters in the story, where they experience new realities at the same time that they try to find their own identity. Using fantasy as a resource in the search for their cloaked identity, the psychological involvement with imaginary worlds involve the triggering of a turmoil of emotions, very specific to this growing stage, where there is the need to make clear distinction between good and bad, right and wrong, thereby creating in the reader a feeling of balance and welfare and providing him with the tools to guide himself through his long existential journey, preparing him for the bumps and setbacks he will have to face.

For the individual who can develop the ability to create cultural fantasy, the rewards are great. It is questionable whether any other quality of art has the persuasive and pervasive impact of mythic fantasy, whether any other can affect what Joseph Campbell called 'the centres of life beyond vocabularies of reason and coercion' and establish a communication from the inner being to another across time and space. (Collins & Pearce, 1985: 8)

At the same time that youngsters feel scared of the unknown, sometimes suffering through it while at other times trying to get away from its scope of action, they are also eager to discover its attractions. It's a dichotomy that, despite presenting itself as inexplicable, is surely a reality underlying many youngsters' daily lives. And it's by facing both sides of the problem that they learn by doing, managing to put their efforts into practice. By nature, they constantly search for more, they look for higher limits, they dare to overcome the insurmountable, orienting their actions so as to achieve their goals, although they sometimes get caught in the treacherous webs that life presents them. Within their personal developmental processes, individuals learn how to make the most adequate choices, how to opt for the most convenient paths, having previously received personal and social guidance, which as time goes by will provide them with the necessary orientation that is most required for the growing process, even if, during the process they have to undergo unexpected situations. The inner vulnerability of the youngsters' minds doesn't always allow them to take decisions as easily as an adult, as they are in a very unstable emotional period of their growth. Occasionally, when having to face adverse situations, youngsters don't show the ability to reason clearly, so it's important that someone external to this developmental process provides them with the basic elements of wise judgement, civic awareness and ethics.

The powerful and compelling circumstances of *Harry Potter*'s world can't be neglected, for they can be considered leading factors in its global success, taking into account the scope of the media, generally speaking, with advertising and promotional marketing techniques commanding the process of creating and developing the *Harry Potter* phenomenon. How remarkable it is that throughout the world and all of a sudden, millions of fans developed a passion for this product and became greedy for more and more adventures. With her books, J. K. Rowling became a reference to many youngsters

and some adults around the world, at the same time transforming her product into a compulsive type of reading. Consequently, the production of the films and all the possible products associated with the brand have made that bond between creator and audience even stronger, thus developing a worldwide fraternity around the *Harry Potter* creation.

J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series fulfilled a need in that people love a classic story of a fallible hero, coming of an age and good versus evil. Add elements of magic and suspense to the story and make the characters ones people can relate to and you have the initial ingredients of success. (Gunelius, 2008: 157)



## Chapter 1 – J. K. Rowling and writing for children in the age of non-nuclear families

Literary experts are unanimous in affirming that writing is a fairly demanding activity and that writers need to be cautious when they set their goal of creating a written



**Picture 1** - J. K. Rowling

piece of art. All kinds of literature, but especially children's literature require a determining presence and a visionary perception. When writing for children, there is an extra concern: stories for non-adults should both be (and enable) explorations of life experiences, as certain readings can act as transformations, if the readers' minds are engaged enough in the process. Therefore, one has to be careful when writing for children, for the stories created must develop interesting themes, they must present appealing plots and structures, they must introduce the reader to remarkable characters, by choosing an adequate and appealing setting, all this expressed by means of an attractive style. Indeed, the learning process which makes up part of the mental development of children is, no doubt, surrounded by multiple possibilities, which, if used adequately, can make a great difference in this multifaceted procedure. Many are the issues to be referred to and various are the means to approach them, however, the art of writing, especially for children, carries with it a special responsibility in that it helps to meet the readers' needs. Consequently, it's the writer's aim to engage the readers in his or her work if one really wishes to make a difference in their minds. As Lerer writes:

Ever since there were children, there has been children's literature. (...) The history of children's literature is inseparable from the history of childhood, for the child was made through the texts and tales he or she studied, heard, and told back. Learning how to read is a lifetime, and life-defining experience. (Lerer, 2009: 1)

It is extremely important to bear in mind that children's brains, besides being quite active, are also extremely demanding. They are a turmoil of ideas and expectations in a

constant demand for different stimuli to arouse their inner curiosity, with their imagination constantly flowing in the search for new experiences. Therefore, starting at an early age, children frequently encounter stories that become part of their lives, but writers must have an inherent ability to identify and address the target group they are addressing. In the history of writing for children, authors such as Hans Christian Andersen, Charles Dickens, Enid Blyton, Dr. Seuss or Roald Dahl have delighted the imagination of millions of children and teenagers around the world and they still do in the twenty-first century, with multiple translations of their works being published in several countries.

When we refer to children or juvenile literature, there is an immediate natural understanding that the logical key to its success is the interest it might cause in its demanding child readers, for consciously or not, they are very critical of what they read, that being the required element to transform it into a success or failure. Looking back in time, before the eighteenth century childhood wasn't a stage of much concern for authors; it was only the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century that brought the idea of written work expressly for youngsters. At that point, the writers' responsibility when writing for young people was perceived as greater than when writing for adults, having been made clear that children are a strangely impressionable target group, whose interests and demands differed importantly from those of adults.

Children's literature is (...) one of the roots of western culture (...). For both adults and children it serves the purpose that 'literature' is frequently claimed to serve: it absorbs, it possesses, and is possessed; its demands are very immediate, involving, and powerful. Its characters (...) are part of most people's psyche, and they link us not simply to childhood and storying, but to basic myths and archetypes. Children's books are important educationally, socially, and commercially. (Hunt, 1994: 1)

Considering most homes in current societies, children's literature has become a widespread commodity, with young readers eagerly requesting stories through which they can easily re-imagine and re-invent the situations, spaces, and people of their everyday life experience. In this imagination process, children's ideas of the world and also the fantasies created by adults themselves must be accounted for, bringing to mind the need of human beings to have something to lift them out of their routines, as an escape. Myths, fantasy, fairy tales have been part of fiction from before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

with imaginary worlds becoming a strong asset in children's minds, as this kind of story recalls imaginative worlds. An example of these early works might be Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, both works for adults which also became children's classics because of their fantastical dimensions. That power of imagination is crucial in literary work, giving the reader the possibility and an inner ability to, by himself, construct places of adventure, emotion, admission and agreement. In this sense, "fantasy and imagination are important parts of being human, and we need stories to understand our place in the world." (Smith, Kevin, 2007: 165). And as self-conscious as they are, readers are always bearing in mind that literature, by means of the fantasy worlds created, is at the same time an approach to and a withdrawal from society. At present, the readers are offered a wide range of topics within the development of the written work, enabling them to get a wider perspective on the real world in which they are actually engaged, but from which there is sometimes an urgent need to escape.

Fairy-tale themes include unhappy childhoods, dangerous romances, the struggle between individuality and community, the journey toward community, and the celebration of life. (...) In addition, myths and fairy-tale themes include quests, the relationship of the sexes, the search for identity, individuation, and healing, and the transformation of individuals and their surroundings. (Wilson, 2008: 5)

As Collins and Pearce also explain,

Fantasy is a universal phenomenon. (...) Much juvenile fantasy, past and present, provides the young with forms to gratify their needs for power and to express their aggression and rebellion. Fantasies, such as fairy-tales, create worlds for children with their own themes, logic, (or illogic), and settings that are in stark contrast to their ordinary world, controlled as it is by adults. (Collins & Pearce, 1985: 26)

Fantasy and science fiction literature have the inner feature of providing a reliable space, one that enables the reader to get distant from reality and avoid daily life problems. Children and teenagers enjoy novels, short stories, or films where they enter new worlds rich of fantastic places and amazing characters. Imagining themselves as the protagonist of the book or film, youngsters feel more confident and more able to perform

their own tasks in reality. In the *Harry Potter* series, the hero-boy, together with his peers, face issues which are also to be found in the real world, such as racism, bullying, social class discrimination and by verifying that daily struggles in the growth process from childhood to adulthood aren't that different in both worlds, young readers become more reconciled to the kind of life they really have. So at the same time that youngsters enjoy reading about imaginary fantastic places, they also like to read something that somehow reminds them of their common daily experiences and they can simultaneously approach or gain distance from the text, according to their state of mind at the moment of reading. "Rowling is a world-builder whose fully imagined fictional universe harbours a sense of verisimilitude, a world we recognize and with which we are familiar, since it is anchored in the real world that coexists with the magical world" (Beahm, 2005: 99). Indeed, the proximity of the topics developed through the texts she produced makes the reader feel part of it. In that sense, the *Harry Potter* stories present such subjects as the traditional role of families, the strength of the bonds of love and friendship, rivalry, personal grief, death or loss of beloved ones, betrayal, breaking rules, school life, bullying or even the fight for one's dreams. Therefore, the first condition for having the reader identified with the book is established and young readers find themselves in a domain they know so well.

Certainly, fiction and fantasy can be a way of attracting youngsters, as new realities allow them to travel within parallel worlds, where they can feel psychological comfort and explicit motivation based upon their own experiences and their inner conflicts, which are common characteristics of all adolescents. Fantasy can be seen as a powerful strategy which helps the reader coping with tough obstacles, whose resolution seems to be impossible. Taking into account the life and development of children, it's known that they suffer great transformations throughout the years and as they leave childhood, on their way to adulthood. They experience quite a wide range of situations which, at the same time that they test them, will also contribute to the formation of their personality, making them grow as individuals both flexible and mature enough to respond to the challenge of the moment. As is well known, the individuals who are undergoing both physical and psychological development need a refuge where they can feel accepted as they really are, avoiding constant criticisms, conflicts, pressures or even rejections. What is needed is a more peaceful protective surrounding where love and understanding are widely available.

Effectively, all the instability inherent to the childhood and adolescent stages of life is a

handicap in the growth process: individuals are suffering several changes which obviously affect both the mind and the body and which make it a hard task to respond to and cope with all these stimuli. They get confused, they lack self-confidence and the capacity for autonomy, they face misunderstandings when dealing with adults, especially their parents, they feel alone, scared, anxious due to this ambiguous and complex phase of their lives. Therefore, as a protection, teenagers tend to create their own shell and either they confront conflicts directly, creating or developing unequal relationships with adults, or they wisely hide themselves behind a mask, which is certainly created with the intention of avoiding even more serious problems. Their lives become a constant challenge: defying adults is a challenge, at least until they achieve a more stable psychological state, which will provide the maturity that is needed to express their feelings, share their anxieties or state their ideas. Children's literature itself can be seen as a form of fantasy, where the deepest wishes and ambitions even of the weakest, seem possible of fulfilment, independently of any inconvenience or distrust. We are therefore dealing with books that very wisely develop the exploration of topics and imagined situations rather than just merely describing existing facts. By using fantasy the writer suspends the need for oppressive rules, with the advantage that it can even negotiate wider problems. It can triumph over difficulties such as malice or death, but never with the intention of just simplifying or ignoring the problems.

Adventure and fantasy have always been incentives to keep youngsters focused on reading and using fantasy can be, from some perspectives, the common factor in the child-adult connection in literature, with that genre embodying striking revelations which apparently seem to serve for both stages. This can be seen as a good possibility to reach new worlds, new realities, where the unexpected is obviously a means of making the imagination flow. The emotion of mystery and enigmatic places is a great companion in the search for new realities and for different people. It brings the readers close to the text and they can delight in enjoying fantasy worlds and loving super powerful characters who use their magical strength to achieve their goals. Everyone's curiosity is sharpened when in the presence of a hero who performs magical tricks and when youngsters have the chance to read about fantastic new worlds, full of heroes with the ability to overcome difficult situations, they instantly feel on the same wavelength. To a certain extent, "children's writers, therefore, are in a position of singular responsibility in transmitting cultural values, rather

than 'simply' telling a story" (Hunt, 1994: 3) and we must be aware that "(...) books can be updated and sanitized, rewritten and adapted: they are part of living culture" (Hunt, 1994: 26). Considering the kind of society we have nowadays we wouldn't expect young readers to be as passive as in the past, as they are used to a more active type of leisure, which sometimes makes it hard for them to remain attached to the same activity for a long period of time. I refer to the modern preoccupation with the contemporary child's so-called attention span, which has led to the discovery (or creation) of a medical condition ADS (Attention Deficiency Syndrome). However, "regardless of whether we are interested in children's books as literary artefacts, educational tools, or sociological phenomena, we are entering a world where the core of the text is concerned with 'play' and where 'the pleasure of the text' is foremost" (Hunt, 1994: 26). Needless to say, J. K. Rowling's world of *Harry Potter* has offered ample proof that it is an extraordinarily magnetic invention, which has led readers to what can only be described as compulsive or addictive reading behaviour.

Another aspect of Harry's appeal is that of the apparently ordinary child who turns out to be special – which, surely, is a secret wish of many children. (...) Harry is special. And, like the children in all these books, he's on a mission. Though Rowling claims that fantasy is her least favourite genre (...), her books owe a lot to the traditions of fantasy. Harry, a classic fantasy hero, is the oppressed child who fights back, proving himself and quashing his enemies. The Harry Potter series has every indication of leading to a 'Last Battle' (...) in which the forces of good vanquish the forces of evil. (Nel, 2001: 36)

Travelling back in time, into the history of fabling, fantasy is an old but ambiguous genre. When we began to live in well-ordered and safe communities, then fantasy had the objective of providing its audience with an alternative to this humdrum existence. Indeed, it became a kind of protest against real life. Referencing back to classical literary fairy tales, it's known that the use of the fantastic served as a form of compensation for growth itself, giving the children the right to imagine, to invent, to be in a protective or defensive mode.

The uncanny becomes the familiar and the norm in the fairy tale because the narrative perspective accepts it so totally. (...) The complete reversal of the real world has

already been negotiated by the writer before we begin reading a fairy tale, and the writer invites the reader to repeat this uncanny experience. (Collins & Pearce, 1985: 259)

In 1997 the first *Harry Potter* novel was published and immediately, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series appeared to fulfil a need that readers had, presenting the story of a hero by means of the use of magic and keeping them near the characters. During her struggle to write the *Harry Potter* books, she was aware of the enormous power that books can have, if oriented the right way, as she had the perception that “fantasy literature allows its creator and its consumers to satisfy their desires, because in some situations it is only through fantasy that the desire can be satisfied at all”. (Collins & Pearce, 1985: 27).

Using daily routine as a point of departure, with something as banal as a railway commute, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* we find ourselves on Platform Nine and Three-Quarters and readers leave behind all the complexity of the Muggles' world of reality and step forward into the fantasy dimension of spells and witchcraft. This portal enables them to let go of their ordinary daily lives and get reborn in a new magical and adventurous space where the business of learning is subtly imposed upon them.

In many ways, the use of fantasy is at the heart of the adult-child relationship in literature. Paradoxically, fantasy embodies radical revelations of the human psyche and thus, apparently, is suitable for children: reality and realism, presenting the probable or actual actions of recognizable beings in recognizable circumstances, is treated (...) circumspectly. (Hunt, 1994: 184)

Playing a predominant role in the minds of youngsters, fantasy emerges as an important weapon, absorbing people and making them involved in the building of a new space. It's the birth of a very particular space for repressed and never accomplished dreams, strongly appealing to both children and adult minds. Human beings' needs and hopelessness are what can motivate them in their search for certain elements in fantasy, as most frequently the personal frustrations are the basic step to begin this adventure. The desires and dreams hover inside people's heads and they are the links to allow certain forms of fantasies, to create images. On the other hand, the role performed by parents can't

be dissociated from their children's psychological needs within their developmental process, with an added responsibility for the progenitors, as more and more there is an increasing awareness that their presence in their children's growth process is fundamental if they want them to develop higher expectations in society.

Few parents can be unaware of the enormity of the responsibility placed upon their shoulders, but at a time when the media are devoting ever more column-inches and air- and-viewing-time to conveying to parents images of life in the perfect family, many parents find themselves in the isolation of their homes, beleaguered with anxiety and guilt and unsure of which way to turn as they are deluged with conflicting advice. (Pugh, & De'Ath, 1984: 12)

Therefore, having been shown the power of the *Harry Potter* series, parents almost automatically joined their children, combining their efforts as a way of extracting from those stories the elements which they could benefit from within their relationships. Soon becoming a book common to both parents and children, J. K. Rowling's creations helped lead to the understanding that the intellectual stability of children is also of extreme importance and that there are certain factors that more and more put increasing demands on the role of parents. The raising awareness of the relevance of children's overall development assumes that they are in a stimulating home-setting during their childhood and adolescence. Managing to create a healthy and pleasant atmosphere at home, and enabling parents and children to discuss the topics raised in the *Harry Potter* stories, J. K. Rowling has managed an extraordinary feat. The love of those books surely contributed to the stability within home life, especially (but hopefully not only) in middle-class families, with fantasy being used as a link in the parent-child relationship. As Collins writes, “fantasy provides models, roles for the drama that, if made attractive enough, create a terminology of motives necessary for fundamentally changing what most of us have passively accepted as the 'real' world” (Collins & Pearce, 1985: 30). These collective reading enthusiasms key into the wider debate about the role of environment in healthy development:

Regardless of the extent to which development is qualitative or quantitative, a theorist must refer to the underlying causes of development. The basic issue is whether knowledge and behavior are derived from one's genetic endowment or from



experience in the world. The nature-nurture issue. (Miller, 1993: 22)

Currently the idea that the interaction between what is innate to the individual and what is environmentally absorbed is widely shared with the firm conviction that both are equally relevant aspects in the development of a child. The individual's heredity determines to a high degree his or her behaviour, nevertheless his or her genes are influenced by external elements, therefore there is a strong and direct dependence on the environment, which constrains his or her way of acting. Consequently, it becomes more and more urgent that parents realize how important their own investment in the relationship with their children is, allowing them a healthy connection within their growth process by calmly and unobtrusively providing them with the tools they require to successfully triumph. Solid literacy is one of those tools.

The development of children's thinking clearly does not proceed in an unemotional value-free vacuum. They are surrounded by other members of the species who have a vested interest in their learning, who will seek to improve it, acculturate it, constrain it, assess it and reward it in due degree; and the child internalises at least some of these social pressures and expectations while maintaining other 'interests-at-hand', such as having fun and not losing face. (Meadows, 1996: 117)

As we make the natural connection between the Harry Potter books and quotidian existence, we briefly need to reflect on the life of J. K. Rowling herself, since she was a single-parent mother, who had to struggle alone to provide adequate childcare for her daughter, to impose discipline, to provide stability, to budget the family expenses, in order to soften the negative impact left by her divorce and simultaneously aiming at providing her baby with as many positive life experiences as possible. Perhaps due to all these adversities she had to face personally, she felt more at ease with, and had a greater predisposition to create, *Harry Potter*. Having to grow up in a single-parent environment is quite commonly seen as a disadvantage within the child's developmental process; however, this type of family structure can also be viewed as increasingly diversified – just like families where both parents are present.

Single-parent families are formed in a variety of ways. Although most result from the parents' separation or divorce, some lose a parent through death, and others have had only one parent right from the start. (...) The large majority of single-parent families are headed by a mother rather than a father. (Golombok, 2000: 3)

It is generally the case that the number of single-parent families is increasing, with women for the most part assuming leadership in the parental process, at the same time that they face economic, emotional and sometimes behavioural difficulties. Children living in such a social context may easily be under great pressure, be made fun of or even be bullied by other children. However, from the mothers' side, there is sometimes the generalized feeling that there are positive aspects in educating their children just by themselves, away from the previously intolerable tensions within the family unit. In the second half of the twentieth century in particular, the number of youngsters living within a single-parent family has increased considerably. With the family structure being affected by the departure of one of the progenitors, there are quite a few challenges to overcome, not only in economic terms, but also in social aspects. This has been an irresistible topic for study and specialists have concluded that children coming from single-parent families are at a disadvantage, if compared with the progeny of traditional nuclear families, with a higher tendency to suffer personal and social risks later in life. However, it seems important to stress the fact that each single-parent family is a very specific case, making it impossible to generalise patterns and outcomes that must inevitably ensue.

In respect of another social reality which is very much reflected in the Potter books, it has been proven that children or teenagers who are adopted, after losing their parents, are likely to get a less balanced form of upbringing or treatment when compared with the biological children of the family, even being victims of discrimination and certain types of psychological coercion while under the supervision of the foster family. On the one hand, the adoptive parents want to suppress the absence of the biological parents and want to impose themselves as the leaders of the family; at the same time they are willing to share their affection and concern for the recently added member of the family. On the other hand, in case they have their own children, they tendentiously hide and excuse their own negative actions, having the tendency to make comparisons between the two groups of children they have in their care. Suffering from natural emotional problems, not only do orphans show difficulties in coping with their parents' death, but also in dealing with the

new life process they suddenly see themselves thrust into, therefore increasing their psychological vulnerability. These psychological states are often the background to fairy stories, of which the most obvious example is Cinderella. In this sense, the new environment provided for the youngsters and their ability to adapt to it are of extreme relevance, enabling them or not to fit into a new reality. Their adjustment is seen as effective insofar as it creates in youngsters a feeling of personal achievement and autonomy, realizing that they can overcome hard times and face upcoming situations.

To be cared for by substitute parents or residential workers represents a breakdown in the natural order of things. That such a radical change of caregiver is necessary indicates a failure of the child's biological parenting. Thus, not only do placed children suffer a primary loss, invariably they also have experienced poor quality care. (Golding, Dent, Nissim & Scott, 2008: xiii).

Consequently, in order to attempt to forget the loss they have suffered, children or teenagers have to gather all their strengths and set their minds to developing a variety of coping strategies, both social and psychological, aimed at coming to terms with the recently imposed-by-circumstances environment. Nevertheless, the strategies they sometimes come across may lead them to even deeper trouble, if they don't make sure they are on the right path to recovering and establishing new protective and emotional links. Having quite high emotional needs as well as expectations, youngsters require special attention, in order to ensure the emotional and familiar stability that may be the key to their physical and mental welfare. Children's lives can undergo amazing transformations, as long as those involved in its success help them overcome the moments of adversity that affect them so deeply. When this process isn't followed with due care, the consequences for youngsters may be both physical and psychological, with them sometimes having very serious health problems, to complicate even more the hard times they were already going through. In cases where this happens, many adoptive families look for assistance, after coming to the conclusion that the recently arrived child is in great pain.

Psychologists and other professionals providing a service are often invited to take charge and be in control rather than working collaboratively. Expectations and limited resources can reduce the time made available for really listening to the child and

family and fully involving them in planning assessment and interventions. (Golding, Dent, Nissim & Scott, 2008: 7, 8)

Quite often, youngsters miss the explanation which justifies some of their foster parents' actions, when disapproving and questioning them, at the same time that they challenge their new carers' authority and what was considered to be a possible solution to their problem becomes itself a new reality, with severe implications to all the family members. Many are the risks assumed when taking on orphan children. However, it is best to look beyond those old-fashioned stereotyped assumptions and simply giving them a chance to peacefully enter and be accepted by the new family context, with all participants willing to make the most of the new relationship. Certainly, the deep wish to become part of a normal family is enough to involve both the foster family and the incoming member, therefore creating a settled set of compromises amongst them. As long as everybody understands, accepts and puts into practice what is expected of him or her, the stage is set for the building of an emotionally stable atmosphere. However, it can happen that youngsters experience such early and striking adversity that they develop an inner self-defence strategy to avoid new situations, always with the fear of more possible suffering, thus making it quite a hard task for the foster family. Interested and dedicated foster parents will then put all their efforts into making clear to the new son or daughter all the care and attention they intend to provide him or her, which should be the greatest reason for the adoption in the first place. Having constant and effective forms of communication on both sides is really necessary if the new relationship is to flourish and by articulating experiences as well as anxieties, the task suddenly seems less compromising. Needless to say, the communication system involves adequately and meaningfully expressing one's point of view, as well as willingly and attentively listening to the other interlocutor. Indeed, listening to others can be both rewarding and challenging, as it helps provide the secure feeling of being a functioning part of a specific social context.

If we consider Harry Potter's family background, himself being an orphan from a very early age, we can immediately see how exceptional a person he really was. To start with, his life experiences with the Dursleys show their reluctance to really take care of him, in the sense of their never promoting the broadening of his horizons in social and cultural terms. He was just confined to his own corner within the house and rarely had the

opportunity of seeing different realities. Harry was almost eleven when, in *The Philosopher's Stone*, randomly and for the first time in his life, he was taken to the zoo and the boy couldn't believe his luck. In *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry has his first experience of camping as well as of going on holiday. However, after having been completely on his own, Harry shows remarkable tenacity in persisting with his aims. Not being able to completely forget his ancestors, he continues on his way, creating new but dual-faceted relationships: on the one hand, those who would stand by him, on the other hand, those whose actions would present him with the sharpest hurdles in his life. The merit of his pertinacity and self-reliance make him one of a kind.



## Chapter 2 – Developmental approaches

Living in society can be associated with some wonderful experiences, but it can also become an extremely hard task. If we consider many of the aspects related with the development of children, we are reminded of the natural modifications that occur within a lifetime. The personal development of children, which takes into account all the different stages they have to go through until they reach the adult stage, represents a very dynamic but also, most of the time, a quite painful process without which their growth couldn't be fully accomplished.

Moreover, (...) there are systematic individual differences in the tightness of the interactions between processes, which, in turn, result in corresponding differences in the rate and stability of individual development. These differences are reflected in differences in classical measures of intelligence, suggesting that the dynamics of individual cognitive development determine, to a considerable extent, how much of one's abilities are put to efficient use relative to others. (Demetriou & Raftopoulos, 2004: 5).

In this chapter, I explore some ideas which may help in the interpretation of the psychological character of the *Harry Potter* series. Quite a few studies have been in progress over the last few years, consolidating the assumption that not all individuals are alike, and that each person's reactions and feelings towards specific developmental situations are conditioned by various factors. From the end of the nineteenth century three branches of psychology have tried to understand the function of the human brain, namely cognitive, differential and developmental psychology, each of them covering different areas. Cognitive psychology was more concerned with focusing on the more dynamic areas of the mental process, in order to explain the ways through which all the information deriving from external surroundings is retained, with the intention of achieving understanding, solving problems and taking decisions. So, the main aim of this field study was to see the processes inherent in the reception and storing of information in the human mind. On the other hand, differential psychology showed more interest in explaining the influence of individual differences in the form of action of mental processes, defending the

idea that the mind allows individuals to obtain knowledge and skills and then invests them in the most efficient way in order to face new challenges and solve problems that might emerge from the outside. The very personal way by which an individual acts when compared with others is deeply important for clarifying his or her ability to stand up to difficulties. In its turn, developmental psychology concentrated more on the mental functions of the human body, so as to clarify their reactions in different phases of the individual's life and all the mechanisms rooted and underlying the growth process, where the mind is seen as a fundamental and defining system. One can easily understand that the options individuals take in order to solve problems or overcome difficulties depend both on their acknowledgment of what surrounds them and on their own perspectives of life, obviously also taking into account the inner characteristics of each of them.

Jean Piaget suggested that the children go through a series of phases and each of them corresponds to a significant transformation of their reflective capacities. These stages occur following a specific order and only after going through all of them are the children able to take up their path in life. Piaget's theory defends the idea that children can be compared to researchers or scientists; they formulate and develop their ideas, they test them, and these ideas become more and more complex every time they have their own experiences. The intellectual development of children is based on their individual actions and their growing ability to process the consequences of their attitudes. According to this pioneer in developmental psychology and genetic epistemology, children's way of thinking and the logic they intuit in things are, at an embryonic stage, completely different from adults' procedures.

Piaget, spending more time on the subject than he had thought would be necessary, concentrated on elucidating the specific character of young children's thinking. His work showed that there was (...) a child "mentality" that was structurally and functionally different from that of an adult. This mentality was characterized by several traits, including the lack of a true logic of classes and relations, difficulty in considering reality from an objective point of view, and a lack of true moral norms that impose themselves with necessity. (Montangero & Maurice-Naville, 1997: 7, 8)

As their cognitive development is at different levels, their achievements at each



social, emotional or intellectual stage aren't to be compared. Piaget's studies and researches reflected upon the shift from a momentary action to more reflective processes, showing his particular interest in genetic epistemology, as he showed a particular concern for children's psychology, in order to explore the process of knowledge acquisition and its developmental stages. His studies may be explained through the effects of adaptation and organisation received through biological circumstances, theorising that each person creates and develops enough strategies and methods which allow him or her to become adapted to a certain environment, dealing with its rules; however, the adaptation is merely temporary, immediately changing as soon as the individual alters that primary environment. As opposed to Freud's psycho-sexual theory, Piaget believed that there were four sequential stages, based on the individual's genetics, leading to cognitive development and they were considered the defining steps which could enable the person to form his or her own personality. His structuralism theory expressed the constant changes that happen as a consequence of the emergence of a set of stages and structures that can be seen in external forms of expression such as language and acting. These stages occur sequentially starting initially with physical action and further on extending to the complex process of mental structures. Each stage corresponds to a period of time in a child's development in which the individual is able to understand certain things, but, naturally, not others. Indeed, those stages represent the mental development that accompanies every child, from his or her birth until adulthood.

Throughout childhood, the course of cognitive development may be summarised as increasing emancipation from perception. As the child interacts with the environment he develops increasingly sophisticated mental capacities which enable him to go beyond mere response to the observable features of a problem. The logical rules which the child formulates to permit this development are the central focus of Piaget's work. (Brown & Desforges, 1979: 20)

It's not totally unreasonable to affirm that Piaget's theory stresses the process used by the learner in the construction of his or her developmental transformation, by taking information from the environment and then applying it mentally in a more elaborate form. But for this process to work out efficiently there must be a close relationship that links the two stages. That is, experience, just by itself, is not necessarily advantageous. The four

major stages presented and defended by Piaget are what help to promote the individual's development, managing the necessary progress within the complexity inherent to each step. The Sensory Motor Stage, which starts with the child's birth and goes up to around two years of age, can be identified in Piaget's theory, which defends the idea that development is focused on schemas, which are mental representations of things. According to him, the baby's behaviour is a reflex response to certain previous stimuli.

To implement the notion of a class of objects implies a wider organisation of schemas involving class operations. Consequently the emergence of these operations is taken to imply that a total structure of inter-related operations exists. Many of these may not yet have been externalised, but they exist 'as latent' or 'potential' operations. (Brown & Desforges, 1979: 31)

Finally, there is the last stage, the Formal Operational Stage, going from eleven to around sixteen, where the structures of development become more abstract. On the edge of the final moment in the intellectual developmental process, the cognitive process starts its formalisation, as there is a detachment from factual reality. Formal operations are the starting point in the growth process, lined up by hypothetical and deductive discourse, but having behind it real experiences as the starting point. Therefore, adolescents, when in the presence of a problem, are going to analyze the different possibilities for solving it and only then will they feel more confident to put them into practice. As a matter of fact, this new capacity for abstraction will provide the adolescents with the necessary tools to consider different possibilities and then to act according to a logically organized system of thought. The problem-solving capacity is ready to be put into action as soon as any difficulty comes along. Having followed all these natural and genetic procedures, adolescents reach a certain stability in the development of their psychological cycle, having received the basic competencies that are required to more easily integrate the standards of thought demanded by the adult world. Following all the steps inherent to Piaget's theory, when the child becomes an adolescent, he has acquired great personal achievements, being transformed into a prepared and daring individual, whose abilities provided through this long process will enable him to succeed as an adult.

Where a child is limited to action and a partial reality the adolescent mentally surveys

many possibilities, forms theories and conceives imaginary worlds. His increasing interest in a variety of social systems, real and possible, obliges him to be critical of his own standards so that he begins to look objectively at himself and the assumptions of the various groups of which he is a member. (...) In games he changes rules as he wishes provided that those who play agree. His moral judgements become less extreme. (...) Firstly, the adolescent can accept assumptions for the sake of argument. Secondly, he makes a succession of hypotheses which he expresses in propositions and proceeds to test them. Thirdly, he begins to look for general properties which enable him to give exhaustive definitions, to state general laws and to see common meanings in proverb or other verbal material. (Beard, 1969: 98)



**Picture 2** – The Dursleys

In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the main character is introduced to the reader as a “baby boy, fast asleep” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 16) who “rolled over inside his blankets without waking up” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 18). By then, “on the dull, grey Tuesday (...), there was nothing about the cloudy sky outside to suggest that strange and mysterious things would soon be

happening all over the country” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 7), the reader gets to meet a new-born baby boy, who was unexpectedly carried by Hagrid to be taken care of in the Muggles' world, following Professor Dumbledore's wise decisions. As the Headmaster clearly explained, the boy was taken to his uncle and aunt's house, as they were the only family left and it was supposed that it would be the best place for him. In the first chapter of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the reader doesn't get any other type of information about this baby's physical or psychological development, but, when chapter two comes, around ten years have gone by since the day the boy was unexpectedly found on the door step. From now on, the reader is going to closely accompany Harry Potter's growth process, knowing nothing about his development to this point. Except for the reference to “a tuft of jet-black hair over his forehead” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 16) with “a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 17) there is no knowledge about his physical growth. The reader clearly understands that in psychological terms, Harry was far from being a happy child. He had no mental image of his parents, although he sensed that

there was something odd about the limited information he had about them. Deep in his mind, he had the perception that his parents hadn't really died in a car accident, as there was a frequent vision that came to him especially when he was alone inside the cupboard, which came together with a blinding flash of light and a terrible burning pain on his forehead. The little boy's sadness can be seen in his constant wishes, because even as a young boy he always had the dream of creating a special relationship with someone who would take him away from where he was, but the achievement of that wish was taking too long to happen. Besides, his failure to integrate into groups made him even more depressed, as not only at home, but also at school he had no one. "Everybody knew that Dudley's gang hated that odd Harry Potter in his baggy old clothes and broken glasses, and nobody liked to disagree with Dudley's gang" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 27). The reader is in the presence of an unfit and under-appreciated child who, based on his very few and narrow experiences, had quite a number of difficulties in understanding certain situations, such as his parents' death or his Cousin Dudley's permanent aggression, (Dudley rejoices in being an extremely spoilt boy who dominates his parents and his peers). Nevertheless, Harry never dared to criticize his family or to demand explanations, demonstrating thereby his mental restraint and noticeably distancing himself from Dudley's stinginess.

Harry was on the threshold of his eleventh birthday, completely unaware of all the surprises he would get, starting with the first decision-making moment of his life. All the unexplained anxiety underlying his birthday might seem quite odd, as it had never been celebrated with great joy or fun, and in terms of presents, he was used to coat-hangers, or second-hand old socks. But in Harry's mind, there was a silent countdown which made him more and more nervous about the approach of midnight. In the story, the celebration of Harry's eleventh birthday brings about all the features of a new psychological stage: on the one hand, the boy is faced with a considerable quantity of unexpected information about himself and his family, which was, so far, completely hidden from him. On the other, he is given the opportunity to thoroughly change his life, putting an end to his precarious previous existence. Through Rubeus Hagrid, the Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts, Harry was suddenly informed of his wizard status and his having been accepted at Hogwarts, a Wizard School which he had never before heard of.

"Do you mean ter tell me (...) that this boy – this boy! - knows nothin' abou' – about ANYTHING?", (...) About our world, I mean. Your world. My world. Yer parents'

world. “Harry – yer a wizard. (...) A wizard, o' course (...) an' a thumpin' good'un I'd say, once yeh've been trained up a bit. With a mum an' dad like yours, what else would yeh be?” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 41, 42).

By then Harry's head was a turmoil of doubts, but it was such a huge surprise that he couldn't even decide where to start. Harry couldn't possibly understand or explain what was really going on, but he was surely anticipating great changes in his life. Due to all the circumstances, it wasn't easy for the boy to immediately organize his thoughts. However, in the presence of his newly acquired friend, Hagrid, he felt protected, defended, taken care of, which was a completely new feeling in his eleven-year-old life. With perseverance Harry managed to accept Professor Dumbledore's invitation to enrol in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, despite his Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia's displeasure, for they had always done their best to hide Harry's wizard condition from everyone: “He's not going (...) we swore when we took him in we'd put a stop to that rubbish (...) swore we'd stamp it out of him! Wizard, indeed!” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 43, 44). Harry immediately realized all the lies that he had been told and he felt both angry and disappointed.

Hagrid's unconditional support gave him even more strength to loosen all the ties he had formed with the Dursleys, for he couldn't forgive the concealment of such important aspects of his personal and family life. Hagrid's angry reaction was almost immediate and appeared very explicitly in his face, when he threw a threatening look at Harry's family. The recently created bond between Harry and Hagrid was enough



**Picture 3 - Hagrid**

to trigger the beginning of a sustainable relationship which would become even stronger over the years spent at Hogwarts and which would give the boy the strength and cooperation he needed to feel confident to make his own choices.

The reader is therefore introduced to the makings of a self-confident boy who, despite all the news associated with his wizard condition, seems to be willing to learn about his ancestors and happily starts projecting new developments for his life. So, being taken by Hagrid to Diagon Alley, a magically hidden shopping precinct in London, Harry soon became aware of his wealth and fame among wizards and after the purchase of all necessary equipment to attend the new institution, he started to prepare himself for the great adventure of going to Hogwarts. The day after all the surprises was the last day of

August and Harry woke up very early, so anxious and stressed that he couldn't fall asleep again. Like any other kid at the beginning of a school year, Harry was not only full of personal expectations, but also completely fascinated by all the new challenges ahead of him. If, on the one hand, there is a natural fear of the unknown, on the other hand, there is the wish to develop and improve his living conditions and the reader gets the feeling that Harry is more than ready to move forward.

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry is already in his fourth year at Hogwarts, “a skinny boy of fourteen (...) bright green eyes (...) untidy black hair (...) the old scar on his forehead, which was shaped like a bolt of lightning” (*Goblet of Fire*: 20). At this stage there isn't much reference to his physical growth, however, the reader is shown the boy's determination in accepting the Weasleys' invitation to the final of the Quidditch World Cup, as it was considered a unique chance in his life, with him promptly standing up to Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia in a way he wasn't used to. In order to get the answer that he wanted, and against all expectations, Harry dared to show his determination in order to achieve his goal.

Gone were the days when he had been forced to take every single one of the Dursleys' stupid rules. (...) He wasn't going to let Uncle Vernon stop him going to the Quidditch World Cup, not if he could help it. Harry took a deep, steadying breath (...) Ok, I can't see the World Cup. Can I go now, then? Only I've got a letter to Sirius I want to finish. You know – my godfather (...); he stopped there to enjoy the effect of these words. (*Goblet of Fire*: 35).

Harry could feel quite proud of himself for asserting himself, something which had been completely unimaginable and simultaneously the reader backs the boy's decision, not only clearly understanding his point of view, but also being delighted by all the psychological breakthrough which it represented.

After the Quidditch World Cup, it's time for another school year, and when catching the Hogwarts Express, Harry and his schoolmates, through Mrs Weasley, learn that it is to be a very exciting year, with some changes in the previously established rules. With this surprising but not altogether explicit information, a certain atmosphere of uncertainty is created. Ron's mother thus created great expectations in the boys' minds, but by not revealing all that she knew, she lets the normal course of events take place at Hogwarts.

Only at the Sorting Hat Ceremony, in the presence of all the students and teachers, did they come to understand what the news was, when Professor Dumbledore informed the students that the inter-house Quidditch Cup would not take place as it usually did. Instead, another event would replace it, the Triwizard Tournament, starting in October and continuing through the school year, with the profound personal involvement of all teachers. Against his will, and without knowing how that could possibly have happened, Harry would later be selected by the Goblet of Fire to represent his school, against more experienced representatives of the other schools. This was indeed quite a tremendous shock to everyone, including Harry himself. "He sat there, aware that every head in the Great Hall had turned to look at him. He was stunned. He felt numb. He was surely dreaming. He had not heard correctly. There was no applause. A buzzing, as though of angry bees, was starting to fill the Hall". (*Goblet of Fire*: 239).

Feeling completely incredulous, Harry wasn't able to logically organise his ideas in order to explain what had happened and he simultaneously suffered from the indifference and hostility of those around him, which caused him sorrow. But now, there was no possible way out of the Tournament and Harry was intelligent enough to understand the danger and pressure he was about to be put through, with the additional difficulty of not being able to count on his best friends and his teachers, in the light of their current attitude. As the Headmaster informed the participants, the tasks to be performed would be conceived to test their daring and their courage, preventing them from appealing to any kind of outside help, either from their teachers or their friends. Although Harry was conscious of the trouble he was about to get into, only one question absorbed his mind, reflecting all his distress. In fact, what most worried him was if anyone at school would believe in his innocence, except for Ron and Hermione.

In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry is sixteen years old and before his seventeenth birthday he already knows what lies ahead, because as soon as he turns seventeen he would lose the protective charm that was used to safeguard him, and he would be completely exposed to his enemies' attacks. And as Mad-Eye impatiently affirmed, as a form of advice, the protection that had been provided by his mother would lose its effect. With the approaching of that moment and the prospect of being attacked by Death Eaters or Dementors, Harry still kept track of the situation, and started calculating a workable way out, having already made quite a few arrangements with his friends, who

were about to show up and lead him away to a safer place. Occupying his mind while waiting for the right time to leave, and sentimentally recalling the time spent in that house, Harry went to his bedroom for a last look, contemplating the space which had once created in him the desire to be taken away. The prudent boy was prepared for the ride, but the moment he understood that so many people were going to disguise themselves as Harry Potter, so as to deceive his enemies, he, all of a sudden, demonstrated both his concern and his stubbornness, trying to dissuade them. He would by no means allow his friends to take unnecessary risks just to save him. The reader can't help feeling gratified by the boy's attitude, due to his maturity and big heart, a boy who, despite being in a dangerous situation, from which he wouldn't be able to escape, he has the noble attitude of thinking of the others' welfare, as their own lives would also be at risk. In fact, the reader can note that he has matured into an adolescent whose behaviour is considerate, making him a gracious and balanced human being, someone that enriches the lives of all those around him.

However, still in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry's defensive abilities and problem-solving skills will once again be on trial, and in order to prove his mental awareness of danger, he will surround himself with the necessary means to accomplish his tasks, although, in most cases, not in a conscious and deliberate way. In fact, his personal judgment does not always guarantee him success, therefore, he sometimes has to involve his friends' cooperation as an indispensable aid, or the accomplishment of his goals could be beyond him. Indeed, the day Harry celebrated his seventeenth birthday, he unexpectedly learnt of the contents of Professor Dumbledore's Last Will, according to which he would receive the famous Snitch he had caught in his first year at Hogwarts, and as the Minister for Magic informed him, the second legacy was the sword of Gryffindor. Never had this situation crossed Harry's mind, despite all the affection and respect he shared with the Hogwarts' Headmaster. Actually, following the behavioural tendencies he had already familiarized his readers with, there weren't any traces of superiority in Harry's make-up; on the contrary, his typical humility was reflected in his quest to understand why he had been left these two objects. However, upon receiving the surprising information, Harry showed his profound displeasure as he realized that the Minister for Magic had kept the sword as Gryffindor property. "The sword of Godrick Gryffindor is an important historical artefact, and as such, belongs (...) according to reliable historical sources, the sword may present itself to any worthy Gryffindor (...), that does not make it the exclusive property of Mr Potter, whatever



Dumbledore may have decided". (*Deathly Hallows*: 109).

At risk of being considered arrogant or impolite, Harry declared his point of view, emphasizing his disappointment over the Minister's decision, and making it clear that he didn't fear the presence or possible retaliation of that person, frontally questioning him about the firmness of that decision. On the one hand, the reader sees a brave and daring adolescent defying an adult's authority; on the other, he is shown as a usually shy boy, who stunned everybody by blossoming. Little by little, the reader understands that Harry's early family living conditions produced in him a high level of self-doubt which as time goes by, gives way to more confidence as he recognizes his abilities. It provides both a certain sense of personal maturity, and an awareness of one's own rights, which reflects a more advanced state of psychological development. In fact, the response shown according to different environmental stimuli shapes the type of behaviour the individual is exposed to and effectively adopts, not only giving him a sense of security, but also framing his way of acting. Therefore, the constructivist theory propounded by Piaget, showing that individuals actively participate in the construction of their own learning process, suggests that discovery is based on their actions and the processing and reflecting upon the information they are given, which provides them with the adequate tools to be successful when dealing with tough situations. Piaget's theory defends the idea that children start building their knowledge when they absorb certain meanings from the people, things and places around them. These are meanings that represent the best method for them to learn from, by actually doing the tasks and by creating their own perceptions of reality, instead of continuously being given explanations or suggestions for action by excessively concerned adults. According to Piaget, children should constantly be given opportunities to do things for themselves, defending the notion that the best strategy would be for them to learn by experience, satisfying their curiosity when it is not fully satisfied. He believed that children's thinking skills can be better developed if they are offered real problem-solving challenges, instead of just receiving transmitted information which is at risk of being rendered meaningless if it doesn't relate to their real experiences.

Considering for a moment another possible approach, Vygotsky's theory, on the other hand, defends the importance of the social context in children's development, explaining that the tools which are needed for developing both their thought and their learning are provided within the interactions with others. There is a direct link between the way

children solve their own problems and their social surroundings, because children will thus get a more comprehensive perception of reality and later on they will be better prepared for life. Vygotsky's genetic or developmental theory argues that the mental processes of the individual can be best explained when considering the reasons and the settings within which growth effectively occurs. Following this idea, it's quite advantageous that the children's family, their teachers, their peers and their neighbours permanently interact with them so that their learning processes become more effective. The children will therefore learn by being with others in a social atmosphere and automatically their social skills will be developed, enabling them to effectively interact with those around them and establish different types of relationships. In fact, according to Vygotsky, within the developmental process of children, social extension is structuring, whereas the individual dimension is merely secondary. Indeed, he criticised the egocentric idea defended by Piaget, rejecting the linearity of such a view of the mental process.

For Vygotsky, there is no such thing as a linear movement from egocentric to socialised language. On the contrary, his own observations (...) show that egocentric language is much more than a mere companion to action to be disposed of at the right time. Egocentric language is, in addition, more than an emotional discharge of tension within the child or a simple means of expression. Egocentric language should be considered as an instrument of thinking adapted to all sorts of problem-solving situations, because it helps the child define a problem and build up plans for a possible solution. (...) Thus, if for Piaget the developmental movement goes from the individual to the social, for Vygotsky language is originally and primarily social. (Tryphon & Vonèche, 1996: 5)

In the three books under study, the reader can easily see that Harry Potter is the kind of child whose growth and development were deeply affected by the tragic absence of his parents, although the boy doesn't necessarily associate this fact with all the unpleasant circumstances that later surround his childhood and adolescence. Orphan Harry somehow had become a burden on his Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia, who were used to being completely and blindly devoted to their stubborn son. They felt very proud of their non-wizard boy, considered one of a kind, the finest of his species and Harry soon got used to his relatives' negligent routines since he was left at Number 4, Privet Drive. Although he

frequently felt unvalued, not only by explicit rejection, but also by being openly denigrated by the members of the family, he was incapable of showing distaste for or direct opposition to the Dursleys. He appears naturally gifted with self-control and discretion beyond his years. The Dursleys frequently spoke to each other in Harry's presence as if he wasn't there, ostracising and humiliating him and every morning, when he was still asleep in the cupboard under the stairs, Aunt Petunia repeatedly used her shrill voice to wake him up. No doubt Harry felt an outsider in that house, with lots of photos of Dudley performing various feats, such as riding his bike or playing a game, with his parents drooling with emotion over such a wonder boy. No one visiting them had the slightest idea that another boy lived in that house, for there were only visible references to Dudley. However, deep in Harry's heart there was a strong and secret wish to leave that house. Harry didn't really care about being forced to prepare breakfast for the family, but he clearly felt unhappy about his relatives exaggerated demands: "Get a move on, I want you to look after the bacon. And don't you dare let it burn, I want everything perfect on Dudley's birthday" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 20). Also, the fact that his relatives were constantly teasing him contributed to his feeling marginalised, openly showing their dislike in his imposed presence, as when Uncle Vernon entered the kitchen: "Comb your hair! - he barked, by way of a good morning greeting" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 20), or when Harry is accidentally taken to the Zoo for the first time in his life: "I'm warning you (...) I'm warning you now, boy - any funny business, anything at all - and you'll be in that cupboard now until Christmas" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 23). Although capable of ignoring it, Harry was nevertheless discriminated against at home because of his genetic abilities, which he knew nothing about, and only on the day he was eleven did he become aware of such things, which, for him, was enough to explain most of the attitudes Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia had towards him. That's when it became clear to him that the rule for avoiding problems at home was to not ask any questions. As a matter of fact, for ten years, Harry had felt odd, without understanding strange things that happened with him or in his presence and being harshly scolded and punished without realising how he was implicated or to blame. He frequently had the same unexplained dream of a flash of light and such a strong pain in his forehead that it even burned, but he was far from associating it with his wizard condition. In Harry's growth process, and little by little in the coexistence with his relatives, he acquired his own methods of self-defense, which unquestionably were a strong asset in his personal development. Only in this way

does the reader understand the various and turbulent stages Harry goes through, as he started very shyly and with great uncertainty and progressed until he felt autonomous and secure enough not only to reveal his own views, but also to contest other people's opinions. Vygostky's theory of social constructivism gives emphasis to how meanings and understandings grow out of social encounters, reflecting what the author calls the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), according to which the presence of an adult in the child's or adolescent's life makes it easier for him/her to engage himself/herself on his/her performance, therefore making it much more effective. Vygotsky defended the assumption that children learn better when they interact with a peer or with an adult, explaining that their cognitive development is affected by natural physical development and by social involvement. "His idea of developmental readiness is more flexible than Piaget's, because it encompasses the skills or ideas that children have not yet come to on their own, but which they can acquire from the example of peers or adults". (Mooney, 2000: 85, 86). The presence of others in children's lives may present themselves as quite advantageous, in the sense that there is exchange and cooperation, enabling the existence of different possible ways of being socially active, at the same time that there is the possibility of shaping the whole developmental process of the individuals. The importance of learning as a cooperative experience enables us to have a broader perspective upon the theories of development, as when children are placed in contact with their peers or adults, they are allowed to grow mentally and as a result their cognitive abilities have a higher tendency to develop more efficiently with a little help or direction from adults, which makes them even more valuable human beings. In the *Harry Potter* saga, the reader witnesses the treatment of the boy and his subsequent evolution, enjoying accompanying the transformation from a lonely and shy child to a responsible and mature teenager, with a growing sense of self-esteem and autonomy. The Harry Potter of the first book mainly resembles the boy of the last one because his modesty remains intact over time or throughout all his adventures. He manages to evolve undamaged by his disadvantageous circumstances and to preserve what most defines him as a character: his fortitude and his sweet nature.

### **Chapter 3 – Hogwarts: the school as an institution of adolescent development**

A topic which is often referenced as we move on through the *Harry Potter* series is the value and meaning of education. During the first book, the reader doesn't receive much consideration of Harry's capacities as a student, but in the later books there is information suggesting that despite all the fuss around his name and figure, he is well-known at Hogwarts, not because of an extraordinary IQ, but because of his innate wizard capacities, most of them still unknown even to him. Harry Potter was neither a brilliant student nor had he been lucky enough to get a wide range of learning opportunities or to enjoy contact with stimulating adults or peers.

It is fair to say that the *Harry Potter* series, despite its fantasy elements, also belongs in a tradition of English fiction about one's school days. Many of these texts drew upon actual memories of school. Going back in time, around 1830 there was a large variety of schools with privileged children attending boarding schools, such as Eton or Rugby, middle class youngsters attending grammar schools or dame schools and the poor children going to charity schools and the new monitory schools. "During this period Britain became the workshop of the world, and her national income grew each year. Some of this money was taken by ever-increasing numbers of middle-class people (...) to pay for the education of their sons – and later, of their daughters" (Lane, 1972: 79). As parents wanted to imitate the kind of life of the old aristocracy, they decided to send their sons to boarding schools. Although the fees they had to pay were high, it was an effort worth making, enabling their sons to go on to university when they were eighteen. Those parents who couldn't afford those fees had to send their sons to grammar schools, aware that later they would finish their studies at around sixteen and take up a career. With the advancement in industrial development, progressively there was a greater need for more highly-qualified people and many of those would come from the boarding and grammar schools, becoming the professional heads of industry. Qualified men were in great demand and people started to realise that if Britain was to keep its position as a leader in the industrialised world, education should become a national priority, with all efforts directed towards its expansion.

Undoubtedly, as in the past, education now plays a significant role in youngsters' lives, broadening their horizons, raising expectations and diversifying outlooks and in that

sense Hogwarts, as an educational institution, can be considered an experiential school where students quite naturally attend classes, take tests, and all the other things that constitute regular schooling. But there is also the practical aspect to their learning, something more akin to special education, with them actively engaging in hands-on activities like spelling, mixing potions, cursing and transforming in stimulating interactions with other magic-possessing beings.

Students then also take practical exams to complement their standard counterparts. Importantly, expert members of the largest Wizarding society come to the school and assist in the grading of these practical exams, engaging the community in school events. The idea, then, that students would simply learn through rote memorization and traditional written exams, particularly for a course so based in real-world experiences, seems ridiculous and dangerous in the students' eyes. (Belcher & Stephenson, 2011: 57, 58)

However, we are dealing with a very specific kind of school, where the main character engages in an important task by overcoming of all the snobbery inherent to the very socially class-bound minds of a few of its members. The reader encounters an apparently normal protagonist-boy who attends an elite school, who is excellent at sports but not so good at his studies. Making up part of a multicultural class, Harry has to adapt to this new school reality, quite different from the one he was used to, integrating himself into a new culture with schoolmates who, just like him, have specific features that make them exceptional. At Hogwarts, it's naturally accepted that being different is the norm.

Children who are neglected or miss the opportunities to get socially stimulated, frequently show high deficit levels in terms of knowledge, language, concentration and attitudes and to a certain extent, Harry can be subsumed in such a category.

In many respects, schools provide social experiences that are highly similar to and overlap with those provided by families, the broader community, and the peer group. However, children are required to use specific skills on a routine basis if they are to be successful at school. (...) The abilities to engage in prosocial interactions, regulate behavior to complement that of others, and delay personal gratification are essential for this task. In addition, children's relationships with teachers are less personal and

intimate than their relationships with parents. Therefore, children at school must be more independent and self-reliant and more dependent on other children for social support than would be required in most family settings. (Grusec & Hastings, 2007: 382)

Harry's family and social situation lead him down a slightly different path, as it is at school that he manages to get what he lacks outside it, making clear that the traditional statement affirming that school days are the happiest of our lives is more applicable to the pleasures of having and being with friends and even teachers, than to the satisfaction deriving from academic attainments. Indeed, the role performed by peers is of no less importance, for even when conflicts suddenly emerge, there is always an advantageous lesson to be learned. At the same time, all the attention and support from parents is essential within the context of peer relations, because altogether they help build and develop children's personalities, self-esteem and autonomy, providing them with the tools to move forward in the real world. The sooner youngsters start having contact with peers the better, as they start to assimilate basic social competencies that provide them with the necessary back up to actively intervene in any cultural context. Without one of their parents at home and the consequent reduction of the family group, children will have more effective and stronger interactions with the remaining family members, not only as a form of compensating for an absence, but also as a way of valuing the members that haven't moved away. Without any parental figures, children are thrown back on the affective structures they can find at school.

Moving to another of J. K. Rowling's favourite topics, friendship is a key theme that the author chooses to emphasize, that is, the extreme importance of close relationships, particularly when it comes to taking on new challenges or hard tasks. According to Professor Dumbledore, "there are all kinds of courage. (...) It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 221). This has been the subject of a number of studies that, beyond the family, there are several entities whose scope of action is extremely significant for children's full development, and it has been accepted that peers are perhaps the most relevant, taking into account that it is with them that social life is effectively structured. "Peers show interest, enjoyment, and emotional involvement from the earliest opportunities provided in the first year of life. Peer

attachment is proven to exist especially in the absence of adults” (Lewis & Feiring, 1998: 12, 13). When considering Harry Potter and Ron Weasley they became friends on their train trip to Hogwarts and at this, Harry felt overwhelmed with joy, as never before had he had such a close personal friend, someone to be with and share feelings. Still on the same trip, when Draco Malfoy unexpectedly dropped by their compartment, Harry showed that his relationship with Ron was genuine, by defending his newly-made friend. When mean and provocative Malfoy addressed Ron, rudely affirming that the Weasleys’ most striking characteristic was having red hair, freckles, and exceeding the family’s reduced budget as they had too many children, Harry couldn’t help but reply in a cold manner. In his wicked mind and discriminatory manners, Malfoy’s promoting his own family by directly saying that some wizard families are superior to others, and by offering to help Harry get in with the right types, at the same time that he clearly disrespected Ron’s feelings, is a mark of his snobbery. With Hermione, Harry didn’t create a link of friendship quite so immediately, but once at Hogwarts, in one of their adventures, the girl surprised both Harry and Ron by telling Professor McGonagall a lie, thus protecting the two boys from severe punishment. From then on the three became close friends; as Rowling writes, “there are some things you can’t share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them” (*Philosopher’s Stone*: 132). But in the happiest and most exciting moments of a person’s life, close relationships are absolutely indispensable.

In *Philosopher’s Stone*, at Harry’s first Quidditch match, he was feeling extremely nervous and anxious and he feared he wouldn’t be up to the game’s requirements, foreseeing not only the possible negative effects for his own House, but also the possibility of deceiving all those who were out there to see the famous Harry Potter. Despite the huge sense of responsibility he felt, he, all of a sudden, “was speeding towards the ground when the crowd saw him clap his hand to his mouth as though he was about to be sick (...) coughed – and something gold fell into his hand” (*Philosopher’s Stone*: 141); surprisingly, he had caught the Snitch, which earned him and his House the victory in the game. Afterwards, instead of staying at school and receiving the congratulations of all those who wanted to celebrate his feat, Harry preferred to peacefully celebrate that victory with his close friends, having a cup of tea prepared by Hagrid. Still in *Philosopher’s Stone*, as the story moves on, the reader understands that Harry lacked the friends who could possibly have been a helpful support in the dark periods of his existence when trapped in Privet Drive. However, to his



astonishment, from the moment he became a student at Hogwarts he very quickly established a group of friends, in particular Ron and Hermione, who would become his support system in overcoming the hard times and “during the series, these three friends squabble with one another, give each other presents, argue, and come to one another's rescue. Their friendship is frequently tested, but it always endures” (Nel, 2001: 49).

Concerning friendship, there are quite a few features that must be taken into account, if we want to establish a set of standards that are the constituents of stable relationships, from the perspective of personal development. Harry's relationships, for example, are quite healthy, friendly and lasting, because they are genuine, with the boy committing himself through sincere affection and concern. Harry Potter always had many challenges to face and many of them seemed insurmountable, however, he effectively managed to overcome them with Ron and Hermione's help, transforming themselves into courageous figures who know that cooperation really works because they are



**Picture 4** - Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger

stronger as a team. The trio are pertinacious, facing tough situations and analysing the possible solutions to get to their goals. In fact, friendship in the earlier stages of children or adolescents' lives creates in the individual the skills which are required when entering and facing adult challenges. Indeed, some argue that in very early childhood, there is an incapacity for children to become emotionally or intellectually interested in their peers or in possible relationships. Piaget, for example, defended the notion that the social development of children wasn't greatly connected with early interactions with peers; he considered that they had no social or emotional interest in their peers, based on the assumption that through the early developmental process of the individual, his or her life merely involved the mother and this could end up being an obstacle for their integration in peer relationships. Nevertheless, with more studies, new conclusions appeared defending the idea that peers are very desirable in the developmental process, because with peers children tend to share the same or similar abilities and feelings and peers are like an extension of the self. There is the widespread tendency for peers to protect each other and to form attachments, and then, as adolescents, they have the chance to explore their own

growth, they start to acquire a more powerful awareness of others and become more prepared to deal with all the tensions of everyday life, either at home or at school. Simultaneously, social skills are developed and adolescents start having a more sensitive perception of the attitudes of others and as time goes by, they will recognize the importance of all the encouragement received from the contact with their friends. Children or adolescents with friends tend to have higher self-esteem, are able to cope with hard times and are better adjusted to society. The consistency and stability of one's life depend on the friendships one gathers over life.

In *Goblet of Fire*, cooperation is again reinforced as the main key to their relationship, as both Ron and Hermione spend their free time or time that should be for studying, being with Harry, giving him suggestions, looking for information in the library, finding the best way to solve each of the champion's doubts. Once, when he told Hermione that he needed help to learn how to make a spell she immediately put his wish into practice and together they spent long hours studying and practising spells until she considered he was ready for the job. It took her great perseverance and friendship to be by his side and work with him until exhaustion, but as a true friend, she wouldn't deceive him on the fulfilment of his aim and most important of all, she wanted him to succeed and be generally recognized as a true champion. At the end, both of them were quite tired, indeed Hermione looked exhausted, although very pleased with her achievement, because as Harry's friend she had been up to the challenge. Even on Harry's route to pursue his parents' murderer, there are many obstacles he has to overcome, but his perseverance, together with the unconditional support of his two close friends, manages to be really effective. Besides, still in the same book, more than once worried and cautious, Ron and Hermione tried to prevent Harry seeing unreliable articles about his life in *The Daily Prophet* magazine, where biased journalist Rita Skeeter persisted with inaccurate and disgusting articles, promoting gossip and lacking the professionalism and impartiality necessary for her job. As good friends, both Ron and Hermione managed to prevent Harry from being upset by lies written about him, as they understood how affected he would become, being a defender of truth and sincerity.

Surprisingly, or perhaps not in Harry's case, friendship links are created not only with some school friends, but also with supernatural beings that play an important role in his life: the elf creatures. As soon as Harry met Dobby, he firmly opposed the way he was treated, as he was no more than a

slave. In fact, Dobby was a house elf, whose owners were the Malfoy family and as soon as Harry discovered who Dobby's owners were he set the elf free by presenting him with some clothing, a *sine qua non* condition for its release. This feat secured Harry the elf's unquestioning loyalty, who would, from that moment on, do whatever was necessary to protect and defend the boy. "Harry had set Dobby free from his old owners, the Malfoy family" (*Goblet of Fire*: 89). House-elves were supposed to be unconditionally loyal to their human families; so much so that Dobby, who served the Malfoy family, frequently attempted to punish himself each time he uttered a negative remark about his former masters even after being freed. Such was the trauma he had suffered. As house-elves must obey their masters whatever their personal feelings may be, the Malfoys used to force Dobby to slam his own ears in the oven door or iron his hands if he attempted to disobey them. When Harry realized the inhumanity of the Malfoys' actions, he immediately decided to rescue the poor creature. Although most house-elves would be devastated if they were freed, for it would mean that they had failed to serve their masters properly, Dobby was an exception and he lived everyday as if it was the first day of his release.

But Harry's list of friends wouldn't be complete without mentioning the extreme admiration and respect he felt towards some adults at Hogwarts, Hagrid, Professor Dumbledore and Sirius being of most importance in his life. Hagrid's relationship with Harry had actually started when the boy was a young baby and it had been the giant's function to take him to his relatives' house, where he would be left to their care until he reached eleven years of age. In that moment of separation, the reader can understand that Hagrid was emotionally affected and he was even wiping his eyes on his sleeve, showing that the heartbroken giant only managed with difficulty to turn his back on the baby and leave. But when they met again eleven years later, the attachment was wholly restored, although only on Hagrid's side, as the boy was too young to remember anything about it. Harry felt safe in Hagrid's presence, not only because he was an extremely big man, with a fearful presence, but because he was also his protector. Hagrid couldn't feel more pride in walking the boy through the different places at Diagon Alley when he was helping him with his shopping preparations for the school year and Harry couldn't feel more valued by that adult's presence and it seemed quite natural to him that he should trust his guide completely, although he was given the most unbelievable prophecies concerning his personal and future life. Besides, Hagrid was the one who had told Harry the whole truth about his past and enabled him to finally get

away from the miserable life he had had so far. Another friend of his was Professor Dumbledore. His generosity and personal commitment can be seen both in the way he directed the events in the Great Hall, and also in the way he addressed first-year pupil Harry Potter. The Professor had also been instrumental in taking Harry to his family, and the moment they had to leave the baby behind, he too was showing a sad expression on his face, with the light of his eyes dimmed and the farewell engendering a sense of loss. He too, cared about the little boy and feared for his future. The moment Harry enrolled in Hogwarts turned out to be a great delight for Professor Dumbledore, who, in a disguised way, always tried to protect and guide him. Using all his experience and wisdom, but without definitely standing in the boy's way or imposing his views, Professor Dumbledore was surreptitiously involved in many aspects of Harry's life, as he wanted the best for him and anonymously felt proud of the boy's personal achievements. At the awards ceremony, after the Quidditch Cup, Professor Dumbledore's sympathy towards the boy was clearly shown as he addressed him: "To Mr Harry Potter (...) for pure nerve and outstanding courage, I award Gryffindor house sixty points" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 221). On the other hand, as a true guide, Professor Dumbledore's wish was to satisfy the boy's curiosity, as he realized how important some issues were for him. However, when Harry kindly asked him if he could give him the information he was looking for, he answered in a very diligent manner, stating that what he could tell was nothing but the truth. "It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution. However, I shall answer your questions unless I have a very good reason not to, in which case I beg you'll forgive me. I shall not, of course, lie" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 216). But the Professor's attitude towards Harry was not of instant forgiveness or pity, on the contrary, when Professor Dumbledore considered that Harry hadn't acted according to the established rules at Hogwarts, he immediately imposed a penalty, which affected not only Harry but also his House. As Professor McGonagall put it, at the beginning of the year, every personal success of students has the function of earning their House more points, however, every time a rule is broken, the House will suffer the consequences of bad decisions and by the end of the year one of the Houses will be awarded the House Cup, a triumph that all the Houses longed for. The students' behaviour was to be considered a reflection of their loyalty and concern towards their Houses and to live up to the highest standards should be everyone's personal task. For Harry, from the day he entered Hogwarts Professor Dumbledore had become his mentor, the father-figure of his

life and every time he needed advice he immediately appealed to his advisor.

But Harry had eyes only for the man who stood in the largest portrait directly behind the Headmaster's chair. Tears were sliding down from behind the half-moon spectacles into the long silver beard, and the pride and the gratitude emanating from him filled Harry with the same balm as phoenix song. At last, Harry held up his hands, and the portraits fell respectfully silent, beaming and mopping their eyes and waiting eagerly for him to speak. He directed his words at Dumbledore, however, and chose them with enormous care. Exhausted and bleary-eyed though he was, he must make one last effort, seeking one last piece of advice. (*Deathly Hallows*: 599).

Sirius, Harry's godfather, on the other hand, had also been one of Harry's father's best friends but he had unjustly been accused of murder and maybe because of that relationship, the kind of link he had with Harry was more like that of an older brother, not a father. And it's known that relationships between siblings naturally diverge from those with parents. On the one hand, Sirius wanted to protect the boy and convey advice for his better adaptation to the world, on the other hand, as the youngest, Harry naturally sought help and suggestions. Both of them enjoyed being in contact with each other whenever they could be, "after all, he had only found out that Sirius was his Godfather two months ago" (*Goblet of Fire*: 26). "Nevertheless, Sirius had been of some help to Harry, even if he couldn't be with him. It was due to Sirius that Harry now had all his school things in his bedroom with him" (*Goblet of Fire*: 26). Having been absent from Harry's life due to the legal misunderstanding involving the death, Sirius had himself gone through hard times and once, when arranging to be with the boy and his friends, he asked them to bring food, because he was really hungry. Indeed, for long periods of time, Sirius was a fugitive and had difficulties surviving and therefore had preferred to transform himself in order not to be recognized. While waiting for the trio, he took the shape of a shaggy black dog with a newspaper in its mouth and quite attentively looking around him, while Harry looked on surprised. There was then a regaining of human form, with Sirius wearing ragged grey robes and looking extremely thin, which by itself was an image that scared and worried the youngsters. And when he told them that he had been living off rats lately, they felt intrigued, imagining the poor man's living conditions, and at the same time admiring his audacity in being with them. And for Harry, the happiness of being with Sirius was beyond description. Sirius had

become something of a role-model and talisman for Harry. In fact, when Harry was going through constant concern because of his unexpected participation in the Triwizard Tournament, the thought of being in the presence of Sirius, the two of them face to face, was a tower of strength enabling him to hold his mind together and keep anxiety at bay. He saw his godfather's presence as "the only bright spot on a horizon that had never looked darker" (*Goblet of Fire*: 275). Besides, Harry also enjoyed Sirius as his partner in the fight against the Dursleys, for the moment they were informed that he had been a murderer, they feared the reference to his name so much that they even forgot about all the impositions that they inflicted on their nephew. And with a certain daring, Harry opted for not telling his relatives that Sirius' conviction had been wrongful and that he ended up being absolved. For Harry, this hidden secret helped to turn the tables on his relatives, with him briefly enjoying the upper hand. Then, if we direct our attention to Professor McGonagall, we understand she was also very concerned about young Harry and at the farewell moment she was also seen blowing her nose, and expressing her sadness for leaving the boy behind. When at The Entrance Hall she was hostess to the first-year students, Harry was impressed by that "tall, black-haired witch in emerald-green robes. (...) She had a very stern face and Harry's first thought was that this was not someone to cross" (*Philosopher's Stone*: 85). Professor McGonagall didn't really seem very friendly at the first contact, as she had a tough expression on her face and haughty looks and it was enough to intimidate sensitive Harry. However, deep in her heart, she wanted all the best for the boy, she had a deep concern about his personal well-being and also felt very proud when he succeeded.

Harry Potter! - His heart sank faster than he'd just dived. Professor McGonagall was running towards them. He got to his feet, trembling. - Never – in all my time at Hogwarts - Professor McGonagall was almost speechless with shock and her glasses flashed furiously. (*Philosopher's Stone*: 111)

Nevertheless, despite all her tenderness towards Harry, he didn't consider her a close friend, he didn't feel at ease in her presence. She wasn't the kind of person whom he would easily turn to in cases where he needed help, but he quite respected her, as he generally did with adults who treated you fairly.

Young Harry's development becomes even more surprising if we take into account his miserable childhood. As a child, he didn't have the opportunity to find friends and

create relationships, because Cousin Dudley's nasty influence both at home and at school alienated him and created in Harry a propensity for isolation, thereby avoiding quarrels. In contrast, when he restarted his life at Hogwarts he didn't find it particularly difficult to make friends, mainly because of his appealing groundedness. The links he managed to create with Ron and Hermione would be forever, which provided him with the necessary emotional stability he hadn't had before. After the time spent together, Harry came to understand the importance of the links created with Ron and Hermione, appreciating the group identity which is part of teenagers' lives. And as he had never before created any kind of bonds to anyone, he held on to this very special relationship. In the three books studied here, but also in the other books of the series, a gift for friendship can be seen as the making of Harry Potter; it is the compass that directs Harry, Ron and Hermione's way through school and out into the world of adulthood. Friendship and solidarity are extremely strong values put into practice by the trio, not only within their own relationship, but also towards others, often those who are weak and unprotected. The completion of each task depends upon personal self-control, wisdom and wit, which are strengths that people learn how to manage as they grow older. Indeed, the evolution of each person is reflected in a wide variety of situations, both at the social and the private level, but one point is undeniable:

To be and have friends is a fundamental human interest and concern. (...) The importance of children's friendships has been rehearsed in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century speculative writings on the effects of social groups on human behavior.” (Deegan, 1996: 1)

But even lasting relationships can be put to test and either they will prove really solid or they will wilt under pressure, sometimes falling victim to misunderstandings but often exposed to genuine conflicts of interest.

Despite the inevitability of development and change in friendships, the child's experience of relationship dissolution and collapse can be extremely traumatic. (...) When a friendship collapses the child naturally seeks to explain the event. Children may be left wondering if the failure of a relationship was due to their personal characteristics and doubting their self-worth. (Erwin, 1993: 221)

As Erwin goes on to explain:

Whatever the origins of children's problems with their peers relationships, their implications for the child's happiness and later adjustment have produced in many researchers a determination that they should be challenged. (Erwin, 1993: 223)

Naturally Harry's pathway as the main character is more visible and emphasized, therefore, the reader is shown his reactions, which reflect that as time goes by, he becomes emotionally more and more astute. However, the emotional development of both Ron and Hermione is also attended to, especially in their growing on-off romantic attachment. Although the attachments Harry creates with his friends greatly influence his actions, he doesn't stop doing what he must do, just because they go through difficult moments in their relationship. As true friends, they have to learn to regulate their emotions, manage to interpret the point of view of others and in the end overcome their disagreements, doing justice to the truism that "emotions are ubiquitous in all our lives." (Grusec & Hastings, 2007: 614)

From *Philosopher's Stone* to *Deathly Hallows*, the readers' connection to the moral values underlying the saga are widely shared and supported and it could perhaps be affirmed that this series ends up putting its readers to school themselves. A general understanding of how people learn from mentors and teachers, and from one another, is offered, as well as how a moral character is built through social interaction. The trials Harry Potter had to go through in his life, plainly find an echo in the lives of millions of fans around the world. While in the home context, parental behaviour and consequent reactions by children are already a form of socialization although still on a modest scale, but they already provide significant behaviour modelling, with children being exposed to a large variety of emotions and usually getting some necessary feedback. Every time parents express their emotions in the presence of children they are also transmitting cultural messages that sooner or later are going to influence the children's control or expression of their own emotions, enabling them to reach personal well-being. Not only is it good for children's own self-esteem, but it also provides important opportunities for parents and children to learn to cope with each other, creating stronger bonds in their relationship and



therefore contributing to making children feel secure about themselves.

School as an area of socialization is a place full of opportunities, taking into account that its values are the central focus of its real essence, with an amount of features and abilities that are relevant to the children's future roles as actively committed citizens, responsible enough to promote group work and cooperative activities with peers. While accomplishing these socially integrative tasks children also are expected to assert themselves academically by competing successfully with others or by developing mastery in specific areas of interest. (Grusec & Hastings, 2007: 382)

In fact, the skills enabling children to be socially proficient within the school environment are predicated on the type of opportunities that students are given to reach a balance, and so it was with Harry. The moment he entered Hogwarts was the time he really started to feel entitled to express himself, to defend himself, to learn by example and autonomously, and to meet his own expectations of himself. It was in and through this school that the boy created links with people, achieving one of life's great goals: to form lasting relationships. According to Grusec, youngsters tend to create selective emotional connections with their initial care providers, whose input will in the future allow them to explore the world around them and to restore a certain sense of security as soon as they become anguished by separation from the comfort of the caregivers' presence. The emotional competence of individuals strongly affects or interferes in the exploration process of the surrounding world, which requires a sense of security and balance within the formation of a stable binding. Harry, never having had this at home finds it with a vengeance at school.

In the social developmental literature, social competence has been described from a variety of perspectives ranging from the development of individual skills, positive beliefs about the self, and achievement of social goals, to more general adaptation within a particular setting as reflected in social approval and acceptance. (...) Social contexts are believed to play an integral role in competence development by providing opportunities for the development of intra-personal outcomes (e.g., the achievement of social goals to make friends), but also in defining the appropriate parameters of social accomplishments such that individual skills and attributes can contribute to the social cohesion and smooth functioning of the group (e.g., establishing friendship groups that

are socially inclusive rather than exclusive. (Grusec & Hastings, 2007: 383)

Being a key member of the wizard community while at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Harry Potter experiences many and unforgettable adventures, together with his schoolmates and other magical creatures, all of which bring about a sense of personal validation. The very specific characteristics of these diverse people, who only have their wizardliness in common (Ron's ginger hair or Hagrid's outlandish size, or the elves, for example) is a clear nod to the specific nature of multiculturalism in education, especially in the new Millennium. Physical and cultural difference is a marked element in the stories and specifically pointed up in the characters, so that readers can be enjoined to be accepting of divergence. Schools in the western tradition have had this agenda for a number of decades now, and in that sense Hogwarts comes across as a modern and enlightened school.

If it hadn't been for Hogwarts school, Harry would certainly have been kept away from new experiences in his life, narrowing his development as a person, instead of enlarging it. Teachers involved themselves in the process as much as they could, showing their personal belief and encouraging Harry's active participation. Harry also suffered his schoolmates' involvement, gaining a sense of belonging from most of them and enjoying his unexpected status. Children's accomplishments at school, in academic terms, as well as their aspirations for their future are deeply associated with their own expectations and emotional values, in terms of the motivation that dominates their personal and social performances. As children reach adolescence they are expected to become mature and both individually and socially competent, showing that their own process of socialization is improving. The social context tends to define what they think about and their ways of functioning and also provides the early levels for the development of their mental skills.

## Chapter 4 – The Harry Potter films – developing the franchise



**Picture 5** - The covers of the seven Harry Potter books

Bearing in mind the full process of transforming a book into a film, it is important to highlight the growing critical interest in adapting a piece of work, transforming a text into a film, especially over the past two decades, with the emergence of many films based on fiction texts. Needless to say, transforming a book into a film is an extraordinary complex enterprise, as each of the two forms has a very specific set of characteristics and internal rules which, if not correctly addressed, may lead to a failure in realisation. Cinema and literature can be seen as competing art forms, but they both have clearly distinctive audiences and operate within different commercial realities. Some however defend the idea that these two have become increasingly interconnected, especially in the second half of the twentieth century.

In the quest to find a mode of expression that explains the point of collision between the two media, one alternative angle of investigation might lie in the area of research seeking explanations for the success with audiences of classical adaptations, and to speculate on the ways that the interface between a literary text and its film tribute (s) is interpreted and used by its audience. (Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999: 15)

There are quite a few circumstances that may be responsible for adaptations that tend

to subvert the original piece, or show a determined resistance to considering themselves a subordinate extension of the original, nevertheless, in commercial terms it seems clear that the financial value of a text can be completely exceeded by a popular film adaptation. In this sense, there is a very real fear that the film adaptation gets away from the original narrative, leading the audience to an interpretation that wasn't originally part of the book, so what is at issue here is to keep clear there are certain characteristics of the written work that have to be kept in order to ensure a reliable adaptation. Nevertheless, the levels of success can be altered, pretty much depending on which characteristics of the literary text are viewed as fundamental to achieve the aims.

The question is left open, however, as to how successful films are determined, but it raises the issues of the relationship of box office success, target audience, and how, in particular, 'high' literature becomes popular culture with a corresponding effect on book sales and the perception of literary value and 'high' cultural tastes in the eyes of the mass viewing audience. It is clear that the impetus for most adaptations rests with the relationship between characters rather than the overarching themes of the novel in question, and that those characters, taken from their original context, may to some extent carve out a separate destiny. (Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999: 8)

Indeed, what ends up taking place is not a full conversion of the original text, but an adaptation which tends to paraphrase it. The film director becomes more concentrated on the performance of the characters and on the incidents rather than on style and language and the adaptation into film turns out to be quite demanding, as it involves finding a complete and adequate translation of the specific language and tone of the original.

Although film language is essentially different from language in literature, however, the most important components of the definition we have given of a narrative – time, space, and causality – are central concepts in film theory, as well. Narrative terms such as plot, repetition, events, characters, and characterization are also important in film – even though the 'form' or presentation and the way in which these concepts are actualized vary greatly in these two art forms. (Lothe, 2000: 8)

Keeping in mind the ideas expressed so far, it seems reasonable that there has to be a

very close relationship between the writer and the director's aims, so that the achievement of one is not the destruction of the other. Both the writer and the director ought to share some common intention, despite the fact that one uses words to express and transmit his ideals and the other transposes the images formed in his mind into pictures and scenes for audiences. "And between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media" (Bluestone, 2003: 1). The camera being such a powerful device, it allows the viewer to notice tiny details and make misty distinctions, empowering him with extra information when compared to the reader. Likewise, it can modify the light making it fit an intended mood, by deepening the strength of shadows or highlighting facial expressions, which transforms it into an ideal tool for observation and control of the spectator's judgement. Also in films, sounds as well as moments of silence arouse our curiosity, therefore being used to thicken or anticipate states of mind or situations, providing a new dimension in the interpretation of character and meaning, as the audience seems to be drawn into its plot.

Many of the established prejudices against cinema are due to the fact that fiction is clearly the product of an author, that it is or should be the product of a sensitive or talented individual's life experience, with the writer of the fiction work not being motivated by the commercial gain. Film, on the contrary, is produced and accomplished by means of a large group of people, under a company logo, using highly technological skills and equipment, and aiming at a kind of production that necessarily guarantees a box-office success.

Somewhere between these two polarized views, of course, lies the recognition that the literary market is overwhelmingly guided by market forces (and what better boost can there be to a book's sales than a TV or film tie-in?) and the film industry has auteur-directors who rise to the challenge of classic adaptation in order to realize ambitions of producing the most compelling, truthful and authentic version – or a radical revisioning – of a particular text." (Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999: 6)

Hidden in the minds of some conservatives is the idea that faithful readers of literature might be influenced to turn their back on books. With time this unsubstantiated idea has been fading away, with evident proof after enough research that the attention of films, either at the cinema or on television, can clearly uphold the sales of a novel. It has

also been recognized that people who enjoy a film or television adaptation are likely to immediately obtain the literary version of what they watched. "Film-goers seek out the authenticity of the original, recognizing that the visual interpretation cannot do justice to the depth and substance of the novel" (Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999: 18). While conferring on the written text an undeniable lasting value and strength, it is Bluestone's understanding that

In approaching the novel (...) we are faced internally with the fluidity of its boundaries and externally with its particular relationship to life. If the film is protean because it has assimilated photography, music, dialogue, the dance, the novel is protean because it has assimilated essays, letters, memoirs, histories, religious tracts, and manifestoes. (Bluestone, 2003: 7, 8).

Referring now specifically to the Harry Potter novels and their adaptations for film as the filming process progressed, there was a common aim among the actors, screenwriters, producers and directors working on the project: a desire to translate J. K. Rowling's words as faithfully as possible so as to satisfy not only *Harry Potter's* millions of reading fans, but also the new film audience. It should not be forgotten, in this case, that the author's specific and concrete demands have been acceded to from the first book, and were part of her contractual stipulations when transforming her texts into films. Quite stubborn in this point, J. K. Rowling did not move away from her original decision of keeping a close eye on the adaptation, with the intention of avoiding any possible departures from the original story or changes in characterization or settings. And so, because of her insistence, her books, transformed into films, became extraordinarily well-accepted by film-goers. The *Harry Potter* films turned out to be a joint British / American series of fantasy films, distributed by Warner Bros, with the highest box office success of all times. J. K. Rowling assisted Steve Kloves and Michael Goldenberg, who wrote the screenplays of the films and asked both of them to remain faithful to the spirit she had instilled in her books. She was eventually led to conclude that the films and books were divergent, but only insofar as they had to be. When committing herself to the film adaptation she had total approval on the scripts, with her intuitions about them being frequently praised by Steve Kloves. As the film-makers didn't know anything about the subsequent story's outcomes until the release of the books, they had to rely on J. K. Rowling for clarifications and clues, which became

eventually a practical and effective way of coordination of their work. Dealing with the *Harry Potter* series proved to be the hardest task for directors, and it ended up by having four different directors, some of them only managing to get through with one of the films. In fact, whereas Chris Columbus directed the two initial films, Alfonso Cuarón and Mike Newell only directed one each and David Yates helmed the three last films of the saga. This reality suggests that coordinating special effects teams as well as assuming the responsibility for giving body and structure to fantastical ideas was a much tougher assignment than the screenwriter's.

There was much speculation about whether J. K. Rowling would be allowed to keep artistic control over the films in subsequent licensing deals that Warner Bros would make with other companies in order to manufacture and sell associated products. The merchandising rights were later sold by Warner Bros to various companies, which had the task of selling all kinds of goods associated with *Harry Potter*. Assuming her role as the *Harry Potter* guardian, J. K. Rowling oversaw this merchandising empire of clothes, toys, games, DVDs, soundtracks and more. The arrangements between J. K. Rowling and Warner Bros made sure that the filming company could follow her cues even though the seven books weren't all written yet. On their behalf, the author intervened in the film-making process right from the beginning, interfering in the casting, design and script decision-making, providing her own ideas or approving choices always with the specific aim of protecting the brand. Indeed, over a decade, a familiar atmosphere was created within the production team of the film, as most participants, both the cast and the crew members, were maintained, creating among themselves professional and personal links that would support and strengthen their cooperative work. The most important thing for the author was any falling off of standards, for the level she had reached with her books created in her readers the desire for her to keep the bar very high, both with the books and the films.

With the books previously available to an avid public, her base was already established, but over time the successful marketing strategy emerged of making them want more and more of *Harry Potter*. Fans were being teased with pieces of information released over time, which were definitely not enough to satisfy them and they felt permanently full of expectations and always wanting more of the brand. In that sense, as soon as the first film started its filming, fans felt quite pleased at having something new to

talk about, not merely the story presented in the books, but also setting up their own film speculations about how the stories would be embodied. However, the intention around the appearance of the first film wasn't just to satisfy already existing fans of the *Harry Potter* books, it also aimed at those with no previous knowledge in the *Harry Potter* world, but whose fondness for fantasy and imagination could be aroused. Similarly to what had happened with all the secrecy maintained around the upcoming book releases, the films courted the same kind of media buzz, leaving anxious fans almost desperately waiting for their release to satisfy their curiosity, not only as a form of comparison with the book, but also to take in appreciatively any new elements that had been introduced by the film-making team. Avoiding or reducing the illegal copying of the films was Warner Bros' main concern, it having been estimated that piracy had damaged the company's film profits by millions every year, which made it more imperative to protect the film releases by immediately cancelling the promotional screenings of the *Harry Potter* films. In the past, musicals or historical epic films had been people's favourite genres, however, in the twenty-first century, a relatively new type of film has been the biggest money-earner: fantasy film franchise using advanced computer technology. *The Lord of the Rings* sequence, the *Narnia* books *The Matrix* and *Alien* series are just a few examples of great success. It can perhaps be affirmed that the closest to the *Harry Potter* films is *X-Men* franchise, with its academy for young mutants with special powers, but also with special problems of socialization and acceptance in the world. *Harry Potter* is an example which has been of great interest, as being the youngest of the kind, has reached high box-office profits, when compared with other similar films.

Besides the cinema industry, Warner Bros also licensed the *Harry Potter* films to appear on television screens everywhere around the world taking advantage, for this purpose, of network television, cable television and DVD, distributing them not only in English but also in other languages. The company's power and ability to trade these films both on television and in the cinema helped it perpetuate its marketing strategies and efforts with the record-breaking success that only *Harry Potter* could achieve. As a result, the emotional involvement previously shown by *Harry Potter* readers who appreciated a good story was being achieved with the release of each film of the series, with long-term effects for the revenue it generated. As time goes by, the *Harry Potter* brand has grown in popularity and strength, transforming it into an innovative product leading its market



segment. "Rowling's Harry Potter novels will likely be the most successful film franchise in motion picture history, which is why executives at major film studios ardently wooed Rowling" (Beahm, 2005: 138).

The interconnection between text and film is taken for granted in one respect and that is that when a book achieves prodigious sales filmmakers are sure to come after it. In the spectacular world of film production, there are colossal studios with very complex technological devices as well as talented and devoted teams of experts who are willing to create a mass audience. Finding it seems to be easier in case there is a previous literary success.

On the other hand, the filmic thinking of the individual craftsman, the rightness of the screen for the free-wheeling, plastic imagination, the resistance of film to any kind of rigid code, the rich and complex subject matter offered by the film's heterogeneous audience, the adaptability of that audience to thematic and formal innovation. On the one hand, acceptance of the most implausible heroics; on the other hand, insistence on absolute fidelity to realistic detail. (...) In the film, more than in any of the other arts, the signature of social forces is evident in the final work. (Bluestone, 2003: 35)

Considering the three J. K. Rowling's novels under study, quite a few differences stand out, if one compares the original book with the subsequent film. They are mostly of a trivial nature, but it is worth pointing a few out. Starting with the first book, whereas in the book Harry Potter is a boy with "bright-green eyes", ( *Philosopher's Stone*: 20) in the film they are blue. After an invasion of letters to Harry and a consequent flock of owls addressing the Dursleys' home, Uncle Vernon decided to leave home and drove his family to Cokeworth, to Railview Hotel, a "gloomy-looking hotel on the outskirts of a big city" ( *Philosopher's Stone*: 35), however, in the film they go straight to an old house, quite far in the sea. In the book, "Hagrid helped Harry on to the train that would take him back to the Dursleys" ( *Philosopehr's Stone*: 66), but "Harry's last month with the Dursleys wasn't fun" ( *Philosopher's Stone*: 67), however, in the film the boy isn't taken to Number 4, Privet Drive. Also Hermione Granger is presented as "having large front teeth" ( *Philosopher's Stone*: 79), however, through the film that feature is not observable. Another situation is when Harry finds the Mirror of Erised and "she and others existed only in the mirror. (...) They just looked at him, smiling. And slowly, Harry looked into the faces of the other people in the

mirror and saw other pairs of green eyes like his, other noses like his (...) Harry was looking at his family, for the first time in his life” (*Philosopher's Stone*: 153) but in the film, only his mother and father appear to him. One night, Harry, Hermione, Neville and Draco were caught up late at night and they were given a detention to take place at the Forbidden Forest, but the film presents the place as the Dark Forest.

In *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry Potter is described with reference to his “untidy black hair” (*Goblet of Fire*: 20), but the film shows a presentable good-looking boy. Also, Sirius Black's past is described in the book, as “Sirius had been in Azkaban” (*Goblet of Fire*: 26) however, he has been cut of the film. Ron Weasley is described as “long and lanky” (*Goblet of Fire*: 49), but as the film is seen, that is not at all how he is presented. At the Quidditch World Cup, Harry Potter “was supporting Ireland” (*Goblet of Fire*: 102), but in fact Bulgaria was his favourite team in the film. Another point is about Hermione as a conscientious and caring girl who aimed at protecting defenceless creatures and “created the Society for the Promotion and Elfish Welfare” (*Goblet of Fire*: 198), nevertheless, the film neither shows nor makes any reference to the existence of this society and downplays Hermione's solidary awareness.

In *The Deathly Hallows Part 1* Hermione altered her parents' memories, but the film doesn't show it. Harry rejects the idea of his friends taking a potion to become him so as to deceive his enemies, but he is convinced that is the best, with Moody's pressure. “Harry reached up to the top of his head, grabbed a hank of hair and pulled” ( *Deathly Hallows Part I*: 47), but in the film, it's Hermione that pulls some of his hair. In the book, Moody has glasses for the fake Harry Potters and pours some potion in each, but in the film he only has a single bottle with the potion, which is passed around to all. In the book the side-car that transports Harry from Privet Drive loosens itself from the bike, but not in the film. For the wedding at the Burrow, Harry has to transform himself into “Cousin Barny” ( *Deathly Hallows Part I*: 115), so as not to be recognized, but not in the film. For the wedding, Hermione “was wearing a floaty lilac-coloured dress” (*Deathly Hallows Part I*: 119) in the book, and a red one in the film. In *Part 2* Mr Ollivander doesn't know what the Deathly Hallows are, but in the film he is familiar with the expression. When Dobby the elf dies and his burial takes place, the film doesn't show Harry and Ron giving him a jacket and a pair of shoes. At Gringots, when Hermione takes a potion to become Bellatrix Lastrange her voice doesn't suffer any change. Still at Gringots, it's Griphook that takes the sword

away from the three friends and then goes away, but in the film he orders Harry to exchange the sword by the cup he has in his power.

Considering the Harry Potter saga, and taking into account all its success, it is also understood that this phenomenon wasn't born overnight. As a matter of fact, J. K. Rowling first saw Harry's image around twenty years ago, and in the process of these two decades her creation has reached a position of world interest for people of all ages. When J. K. Rowling's books first came to light, they were, by no means, taken up by literary experts and it would be fair to say that her success has quite frequently been laughed at, even as it went to conquer an unprecedented readership and became the making of the British publishing house, Bloomsbury.

The seven books written caused deep changes in all business associated with the publishing industry, making traders aware of the power of the internet together with that of word-of-mouth, which function as a backup of marketing strategies around the world. The internet has been a powerful and useful tool in the promotion of the *Harry Potter* brand, which has attained a kind of cult following, globally speaking. The social carried by the internet creates the possibility for the *Harry Potter* readers to be frequently in touch with one another (and for the author to address her fans directly) on a worldwide scale.

The Harry Potter product was an inherent good one, which invited customers to develop an emotional attachment to it. With J. K. Rowling working as brand guardian and ensuring the brand message was consistent, consumers felt secure enough with the brand to allow that emotional connection and brand loyalty to develop, thereby giving the brand value. (Gunelius, 2008: 38).

Despite the fact that the writer had originally created the series thinking only of an audience of children, she soon became aware of the scope her story had, appealing to a much wider group than she had ever supposed. No matter the age or the social status of the readers, *Harry Potter* seemed to reach such a wide constituency that led its author to realise that she had effectively created a story for all. Bloomsbury too began to publish the books with different covers, some directed at young readers and others more appropriate for grown-up readers. The films were perhaps always aware that they had to take account of the parents who were accompanying their children to the cinema.

First published in Britain by Bloomsbury, the media furore surrounding J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* began around the time the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, was published in 1997. Parents, teachers, and publishers were all delighted with books that children absolutely demanded to read, while its edition with an 'adult' cover meant that adults did not have to feel ashamed of being seen reading it. The American commentator Jack Zipes attributes the success of these books to institutional changes of education, shifts in family relations, the rise of corporate conglomerates controlling the mass media, and market demands. (Powers, 2003: 132)

Attending the phenomenon under discussion, it seems clear that the readers were gifted a book series whose scope hadn't been seen before and which, therefore, made it one of a kind. As soon as readers started to feel attached to *Harry Potter*, right from 1997, there was an automatic spread of information and the brand meteorically reached the commercial success it still has at present. Being a good product, it was easy for readers to express and share their opinions, creating in others the wish to also obtain the books. It seemed that the *Harry Potter* series had it all to gather the readers' emotional involvement, with the two publishers, Scholastic and Bloomsbury, promoting the series by means of efficient marketing plans.

In effect, *Harry Potter* grew into a cult brand very quickly. People became so fascinated with Rowling's books that waiting for the next book in the series to be released became agonizing. Pull marketing was generating high demand (...) and sales were constantly breaking records. Fans in the United States began ordering books from overseas, which were available earlier than they were in the United States. (Gunelius, 2008: 31).

As openly defended by some, most of the credit of this series, which has to be considered a remarkable achievement, lay in its direct and palpable influence on its age group of young readers. It might therefore be represented as a salutary separation, as they start distancing themselves from the voracious influence of television and computers and attracting them to the sensitive waters of literature that an interest in *Harry Potter* was considered healthy. As Beahm writes:

The Harry Potter novels are about imagination, about self-empowerment, which is an appealing message no matter one's age or nationality. (...) At its heart, the Potter novels are not about witchcraft and wizardry but about human values like honesty, loyalty, courage, sacrifice, and the enduring power of love. (Beahm, 2005: 101)

Readers may have identified the books about the enduring power of love, but businessmen naturally took a more mercenary view. For them, the seven books of *Harry Potter* were a launch pad for the development of eight films, best-selling DVDs, theme park attractions, audio books, video games, clothing, toys. That is how a product of global appeal is taken up and exploited by modern merchandising practices. Gunelius sees this success as predicated on brand loyalty:

Harry Potter filled a void, whether or not consumers realized a void existed. They felt connected to Harry Potter and that relationship with the product and brand created a deep sense of loyalty very quickly. People became invested in the Harry Potter story and had feelings for the product. (Gunelius, 2008: 27).

If we consider the author's view on the facts already exposed, specifically that *Harry Potter* was and is a brand worth approximately 4 billion dollars, we must pay J. K. Rowling the compliment of having followed a dream when she wrote *Harry Potter*, since she was directly warned that writing for children wouldn't greatly improve her finances. Fortunately, this wasn't enough to make her swerve from her intention. In the first instance, her goal was to create a story that would be a pleasure for people to read and her focus was always on that. All subsequent success after the first book was a bonus.

Using magic and wizardry as well as special settings, *Harry Potter* fans use the net as a safe place provided for all readers to inhabit their own versions of Harry's story. As Belcher and Stephenson write, "Through Harry's story, readers see a model for scaffolding critical thinking, exploration of the world, and self-development" (Belcher and Stephenson, 2011: 71). If all the commitment shown by fans can be considered a way of measure artistic success, then it has been achieved by J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books, which deserve to be recognised for the great changes within the literary world. Gunelius also pays

tribute to her work: “In fact, J. K. Rowling's books have become an important part of literary history, as well as an important part of business and marketing history to be studied and emulated for many decades to come.” (Gunelius, 2008: 123)

## Conclusion

The *Harry Potter* saga has become a fashionable item in children's literature over the last fifteen years, evolving from one media to another, so it doesn't seem strange to realize how far it has come, in terms of acceptance, even by the most sceptical, crossing barriers of different ages and cultures. Becoming surprisingly famous, the *Harry Potter* books managed to affect even those who placed themselves on the side-lines of literature for children, suddenly demanding for them. All the media fuss around this phenomenon helped influence people into buying the books that everybody else was talking about. In this way, a bond was created mainly between young readers and the skinny orphan Harry Potter, reflecting their sympathy for this boy whose life experience hadn't been easy right from an early age. At the same time, readers could share in that sense of being special like Harry, even if that characteristic wasn't recognised for a long time. They could also enjoy his discovery and instant fame, therefore entering the cultural reality of modern society with its oncoming process of making people call everybody's attention to their ephemeral passage through life, as the *Big Brother* and the *Facebook* generation so much value. J. K. Rowling's first book itself already foresaw that upcoming fame:

Really, Dumbledore, you think you can explain all this in a letter? These people will never understand him! He'll be famous – a legend – I wouldn't be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter Day in future – there will be books written about Harry – every child in our world will know his name! (*Philosopher's Stone*: 15)

By reading J. K. Rowling's series, broad-minded readers commit themselves into “a time-honored story of the fallible hero and good versus evil that people have always loved” (Gunelius, 2008: 11). A certain view of the maturity process has somehow reached young people, enabling them to value the inner beauty of a written story which is a classical description of the rites of passage in the life of a boy who just happens to be a wizard. Any reader can very easily gather Harry's ideas and preoccupations as he progresses through adolescence, namely the relationships he develops not only with his friends, but also with authority figures of extreme relevance in his personal life. On Harry's journey to maturity he lives experiences that are common and natural to any reader, although the process of

reaching his aims is surrounded by magic, fantasy and suspense, and it is the combination of all these aspects that makes readers long for more. “Children's lives are complex and multi-faceted; (...) children are subject to historical and cultural influences that ensure that every child has an individual and unique experience of his or her childhood. (Greene and Hogan, 2006: xi)

Calling attention to the natural constraints and difficulties underpinning the growing up process has been the purpose of the present study, where the life of a young wizard boy is shown as representative of the experiences that any common child (and then teenager) goes through over time. Focusing on undeniably compelling topics like personal responsibility and courage, the saga presents a youngster who, had it not been his wizard condition, would be like any common boy. And just like Harry, Muggle youngsters are, by nature, going through moments of great emotional vulnerability in their lives, living phases of both physical and emotional instability and this fictional world seeks to give them a picture of their own developmental processes, as they see their lives mirrored in the story. Giving emphasis to imagination, witchcraft and a parallel world at the same time as defending values such as loyalty, justice or peace, as well as presenting family-associated problems and the bonds created by friendship, are J. K. Rowling's main concerns. Within this prospectus, the *Harry Potter* books serve as an escape, when youngsters compare their own and very personal experiences and anxieties with those of fictional characters, feeling the tensions and imminent dangers that are the thrilling ingredients to engage their minds.

Whether in a magical world or within brute reality, the importance of perseverance and emotional support to deal with and overcome difficult circumstances is what makes up the substance of J. K. Rowling's narrative, and in the magical world of *Harry Potter* the unexpected and exciting moments help to bring the struggle alive.

A good deal of time has been spent on theorizing about fantasy; it is seen variously as a retreat from 'reality', using metaphor or allegory to simplify and characterize human traits, to simplify concepts of good and evil, and to gratify the simple wish to overcome them, rectify the world, and satisfy both good and evil impulses. (Hunt, 1994: 185)

In conclusion, by now, right at the end of 2012, there can be few people around the world who haven't heard of *Harry Potter*, either through reading about him or by watching the films where he is the shining hero of the story, not to mention the noise made by the



vast publicity machine built around him. Certainly this extraordinary wizard boy has become very famous and a globally recognized icon compared to similarly well-known names such as Sherlock Holmes or James Bond, these too the subject of visual media franchises themselves. When comparing all these similar cases of global success, it is still too soon to affirm whether *Harry Potter* will have the longevity of these two literary antecedents, however, children seem to have become less tolerant towards literatures of the past, unfortunately for their parents who, all of a sudden, realize that children's classics such as *Treasure Island* or *Alice in Wonderland* are becoming a type of less appealing reading for children today. The mania for big budget fantasy films might also become weaker. However, J. K. Rowling's books are quite likely to always be remembered for their worldwide impact on a whole generation of children who, having grown up with the wizard boy, will probably carry with them all their lives the *Harry Potter* phenomenon.



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(obtained on 20 th October 2012)

**Picture 2:** Mugglespace: the ultimate Harry Potter social network (2010) - The Dursleys

<http://www.mugglespace.com/group/dursleysdeparting>

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**Picture 3:** Lets do Blogging (2007) - Hagrid

<http://lets-do-blogging.blogspot.pt/2007/08/real-faces-of-reel-characters-harry.html>

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**Picture 4:** HubPages (2012) - Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger

<http://mmdelrosario.hubpages.com/hub/harry-potter-and-the-philosopher-stone-quiz>

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**Picture 5:** Bookster Reviews (2011) - The covers of the seven Harry Potter books

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